Price 25 Cents
Thirty Cents in Canada
JULY 1930

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

ILLUSTRATED

A FIGHTING MAN OF MARS

by Edgar Rice Burroughs
AUTHOR OF *TARZAN*

– Also –

NEW, ATKEY, ANDERTON, AKERS, McNARY, *and others*

$500. IN CASH PRIZES FOR REAL EXPERIENCES

"Stowaway Gold"

A flame-vivid story of loot and plot and dark adventure on the Pacific

By FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT

TWO hundred pounds of looted gold, hidden in a sailing ship, and pursued round and round the Seven Seas by the men who knew of it. The epic story of this strange treasure hunt—of the scheming and fighting and murder in its wake—is told by the man best qualified since Stevenson to write it: Frederick R. Bechdolt.

Years ago Mr. Bechdolt won fame as a writer of sea-stories with that fine series "Sindbad of Oakland Creek" in this magazine. Here he tells another splendid tale that culminates in a tremendous climax on the rocky coast of Lower California. Be sure to read this memorable novel, and the—

Photo by International Newsreel

Many Other Fascinating Stories

By Edgar Rice Burroughs, Clarence Herbert New, Warren Hastings Miller, Bertram Atkey, George Allan England, Raymond Spears, Seven Anderton, Arthur Akers and the like, in the next, the August, issue of—

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The McCall Company, Publisher, 230 Park Avenue, New York

...Raised His Pay $4800* After Reading This Amazing Book Which Is Now *FREE!*

* Based on the combined experiences of F. B. Englehardt, Chattanooga, Tenn., A. F. Thompson, Sioux City, Iowa, L. D. Mather, E. Cleveland, Ohio, and many others.

Caught in a Rut

I wonder I put up with it as long as I did! Every day was filled with nothing but deadly routine and monotonous detail. No freedom or independence. No chance to get out and meet people, travel, nor have interesting experiences. I was just like a cog in a big machine with poor prospects of ever being anything more.

Long, Tiresome Hours

Every hour of the day I was under somebody's supervision. The TIME-CLOCK constantly laid in wait for me—a monument to unfulfilled hopes and dying ambition. Four times a day, promptly on the dot, it hurled its silent challenge at my self-respect, reminding me how unimportant I was and how little I really COUNTED in the business and social world!

Low Pay

Paid just enough to keep going—but never enough to enjoy any of the GOOD things of life every man DESERVES for his family and himself. Always economizing and pinching pennies. Always wondering what I would do if I were laid off or lost my job. Always uncertain and apprehensive of the future.

Desperate

Happened to get a look at the payroll one day and was astonished to see what big salaries went to the sales force. Found that salesman Brown made $200 a week—and Jenkins $275! Would have given my right arm to make money that fast, but never dreamed I had any "gift" for salesmanship.

A Ray of Light

Stumbled across an article on salesmanship in a magazine that evening. Was surprised to discover that salesmen were made and not "born" as I had foolishly believed. Read about a former cowpuncher, Wm. Shore of California, making $525 in one week after learning the ins-and-outs of scientific salesmanship. Decided that if HE could do it, so could I!

The Turning Point

My first step was to write for a certain little book which a famous business genius has called "The MOST AMAZING BOOK EVER PRINTED". It wasn't a very *big* book, but it certainly opened my eyes to things I had never *dreamed* of—and proved the turning point of my entire career!

What I Discovered

Between the pages of this remarkable volume, I discovered hundreds of little known facts and secrets that revealed the REAL TRUTH about the science of selling! It wasn't a bit as I had imagined. I found out that it was governed by simple rules and laws that almost ANY man can master as easily as he learned the alphabet. I even learned how to go about getting into this "highest paid of all professions". I found out exactly how Mark Barichievich of San Francisco was enabled to quit his $8 a week job as a restaurant-worker and start making $125 a week as a salesman; and how C. W. Birmingham of Dayton, Ohio, jumped from $15 a week to $7500 a year—these and *hundreds* of others! It certainly was a revelation!

FREE Employment Service

Furthermore, I discovered that the National Salesmen's Training Association, which published the book, also operates a most effective employment service! Last year they received requests from all over the U. S. and Canada for more than 50,000 salesmen trained by their method. This service is FREE to both members and employers and thousands have secured positions this way!

Making Good At Last!

It didn't take me long to decide to cast my lot with N. S. T. A.—and after a few weeks I had mastered the secrets of Modern Salesmanship during spare time, without losing a day or a dollar from my old job. When I was ready, the Employment Manager found me over a dozen good openings to choose from—and I selected one which paid me over $70 a week to start!

Was It Worth It?

Today my salary is $4800 greater than ever before! No more punching time-clocks or worrying over dimes and quarters! NOW my services are in REAL DEMAND with bigger prospects for the future than I ever dared HOPE for back in those days when I was just another "name" on a pay-roll!

Get Your Copy FREE

Right now the book—"The Key to Master Salesmanship"—which banished all my fears and troubles and showed me how to get started on the road to success and independence—will be mailed as a gift to any ambitious man, absolutely FREE. And since there is no obligation, why not see for yourself what amazing facts it contains! Just mail the coupon now—for there is no better way in the world to invest a 2-cent stamp! I KNOW!

National Salesmen's Training Assn.
Dept. H-33 N. S. T. A. Bldg. Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Assn., Dept. H-33, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Without obligation, please send me a free copy of "The Key To Master Salesmanship."

Name ..... Address .....

Town ..... State .....

Age ..... Occupation .....

THE BLUE BOOK

JULY, 1930

Cover Design: Painted by Laurence Herndon to illustrate "A Fighting Man of Mars."
Frontispiece: "Songs of Sea and Trail: XI—'Blow, Boys, Blow'" Drawn by J. Fleming Gould.

Two Fascinating Serials

A Fighting Man of Mars By Edgar Rice Burroughs 32
Ever more amazing are the adventures that befall this warrior of another world in this unique story by the author of "Tarzan." (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

Savage Paradise By Adam Sadler 104
The climax of this picturesque novel of the colorful South Seas is engrossing indeed. (Illustrated by W. O. Kling.)

Stirring Short Stories

Under Fire By Herbert L. McNary 6
The memorable story of a baseball-player from Texas who becomes involved with a racketeer gang. (Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould.)

The Spy Pilot By Kingsley Moses 21
The author of "Piece, Forward!" is at his best in this fine story of a pilot disguised within the enemy lines. (Illustrated by John Hamilton Fyfe.)

Goofer Dust By Arthur K. Akers 54
Never heard of it? Just the same, it's funny stuff, as you'll agree when you've read this joyous colored comedy. (Illustrated by Everett Lowry.)

Deep Water Men By Stephen Hopkins Orcutt 62
"A Tale of Two Pawns" sets forth a specially interesting story of the modern men who go down to the sea in ships. (Illustrated by Henry Thiede.)

The Hatpin Murder By Charles F. Lent 75
An absorbing detective story told in the pleasant simple fashion so characteristic of Mr. Lent's work. (Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould.)

The White Conqueror By Alexander Sprunt 86
The polar bear leads an exciting life—as witness this fine story of the Arctic wilderness. (Illustrated by Lee Townsend.)

Naturally Cantankerous By Seven Anderton 96
The talented author of "Six Bombs" and "Murder for Sale" is at his best in this lively story. (Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould.)

Roughing It in Rome By Bertram Atkey 132
Whirled back to a former incarnation, a modern Londoner finds himself fighting a lion in a Roman amphitheater. (Illustrated by Everett Lowry.)

THE McCALL COMPANY, Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

WILLIAM B. WARNER
President and Treasurer

JOHN C. STERLING
Vice-President

FRANCIS HUTTER
Secretary

DONALD KENNICOTT
Editor

Copyright, 1930, by The McCall Company, in the United States and Great Britain.

Published monthly, at 919 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Entered as second-class matter July 24, 1906, at the post office at Chicago, Ill., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Application for entry as second-class matter at Dayton, Ohio, is pending. Subscription Price, $3.00 Per Year. Canadian postage 50c; foreign postage $1.00. For change of address, give us four weeks' notice and send old address as well as new.

Editorial and Executive Offices—230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Subscription Offices—919 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill., and Dayton, Ohio.

MAGAZINE

Vol. 51, No. 3

Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in The Blue Book Magazine will only be received on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization.

Drifting By Ewing Walker 140
An unusual drama of Southern river life by the author of "Ebon Joan" and "Billy Boy." (Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould.)

Free Lances in Diplomacy By Clarence Herbert New 145
"The Parliament Plot" revives the history of Guy Fawkes and provides you with a notably engaging story. (Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould.)

A Swift-moving Short Novel

The Voice of Silent Men By Rollin Brown 158
The able writing-man who gave us "The Cup of Gold" and many other good ones is at his best in this range-land epic. (Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean.)

Five Prize Stories of Real Experience

The Pistol Whipping By R. A. Clarke 187
The painfully thrilling experience of an oil-well driller.

Washout No. 6729 By Captain Witner 189
A war-time pilot tells of an ultra-hazardous hour.

The Hunter Hunted By R. McKay 191
A Newfoundland schoolmaster battles a bull seal.

The Stampede By Harry Simms 193
A wild night in a Montana cattle-drive.

The Scarred Print By Chester A. Myers 196
An Ohio detective narrates the unexpected solution of a murder mystery.

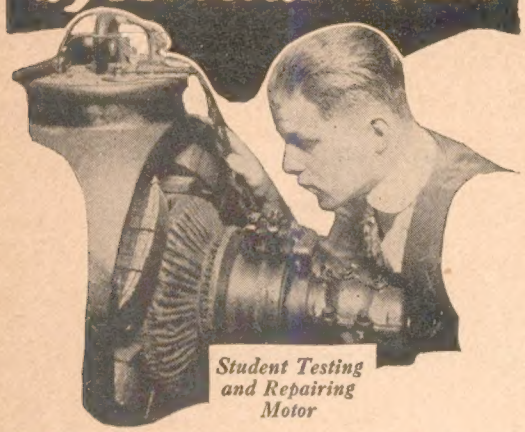
Warren Hastings Miller

Recently a letter came to us from a soldier of the Foreign Legion stationed at Saïda, Algeria. Somehow he had got hold of a copy of the Blue Book containing one of Mr. Miller's stories of the Foreign Legion. He wanted more, but as a Legionaire's pay is almost nothing, wouldn't we have a heart and send him some old back numbers. For, said he, "W. H. Miller has allied truth with a certain amount of fiction in a masterly manner; his descriptions and situations are very realistic. . . . . Legion history is full of acts of heroism such as he describes."

Next month Mr. Miller will contribute a fascinating novel based on the adventures of an American sergeant of the Legion:

"The Red Star of Islam"

Learn Electricity by Actual Work



Student Testing and Repairing Motor

LEARN TO EARN $60 A WEEK AND UP!

or Go in Business for Yourself

Yes, three months at the *Great School of Coyne*, located in Chicago, the Electrical Center of the World, will make you an *Electrical Expert* capable of commanding big pay. The whole world of electricity is open to the practical man—the man who has had actual experience with electrical apparatus. Coyne gives you a practical training on the greatest outlay of electrical apparatus of any institution in the World; everything from door bells to power plants.

Not a Correspondence School

We don't make you a mere "paper" electrician. We train you right here in my shops by actual work on our mammoth outlay of actual equipment. We train you in house wiring by having you do it exactly as it is done outside—not just by reading about it. The same applies to armature winding, power plant operating, motor installations, automotive work and hundreds of electrical jobs. That's why we can train you to become *a Master Electrical Expert.*

YOU LEARN BY DOING – NOT BY BOOKS

YOU DO ACTUAL WORK

The Coyne practical course includes no books or useless theory. We train you to work with your head and hands on the same kind of electrical apparatus as you will find "out in the field." Age, lack of experience or advanced education is no drawback. Our students range from 16 to 40 years of age. Coyne gives you *Free*, a Life Scholarship which enables you to return at any time for further instruction. We assist you to a position after graduation. Free Radio and Automobile Electrical courses included.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN! We help students to secure jobs to earn a good part of their living expenses while training.

SEND COUPON NOW

Send coupon today for big Free Book and full details of our special offer of Railroad Fare **to Chicago.** Act now!

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

500 S. PAULINA STREET DEPT. BO-09 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

FILL IN ~ MAIL TODAY

H. C. LEWIS, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. BO-09
500 S. Paulina Street, Chicago, Ill.
Gentlemen: Please send me free your big 12 x 15 Book, with 151 illustrations and your special offer of Two Free Courses.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... *State*.....

Materials For Thinking

NO other occupation, we firmly believe, is so rewarding as reading—particularly the reading of good fiction or adventurous biography. For—

"Experience," wrote the great philosopher Locke, "—in that all our knowledge is founded. Our observation is that which supplies our understanding with the materials of thinking."

Our own observation, however, is necessarily limited. The reading of other men's experiences, therefore—real experiences like those you will find on later pages of this magazine—is of enormous value to every thinking man. Moreover fiction—good fiction, at any rate—is based on real experience; and so fiction-reading likewise increases our own experience vastly—gives us an inexhaustible store of those precious "materials for thinking."

Every story in this and future issues of this magazine, we hope, will afford you escape for a time from boredom or from your own perplexities. Each story should also give you a little something new to think about—a new fact, a description of an unfamiliar place, an acquaintance with a novel viewpoint. In both capacities we believe the stories which follow will be of great service to you.

—The Editor.

Drawn by J. Fleming Gould

SONGS OF SEA AND TRAIL

XI—"Blow, Boys, Blow"

SOLO: A Yankee barque on the Congo River,
REFRAIN: Blow, boys, blow!
SOLO: Her masts they bend and her sails they shiver—
REFRAIN: Blow, my bully boys, blow!

SOLO: Who do you think is the captain of her?
REFRAIN: Blow, boys, blow!
SOLO: Old Holy Joe is captain of her—
REFRAIN: Blow, my bully boys, blow!

SOLO: Who do you think is the mate aboard her?
REFRAIN: Blow, boys, blow. . . . .
SOLO: Santander James is the mate aboard her—
REFRAIN: Blow, my bully boys, blow!

SOLO: He'll ride you down like you ride the spanker,
REFRAIN: Blow, boys, blow.
SOLO: He'll ride you down like you ride the spanker—
REFRAIN: Blow, my bully boys, blow.

SOLO: What do you think they have for dinner?
REFRAIN: Blow, boys, blow!
SOLO: Hot water soup, but slightly thinner—
REFRAIN: Blow, my bully boys, blow!

SOLO: Oh, blow today and blow tomorrow,
REFRAIN: Blow, boys, blow!
SOLO: And blow for all old tars in sorrow—
REFRAIN: Blow, my bully boys, blow!

"You attend to your pitching, and I'll attend to crooks," said Big Dan.

UNDER FIRE

A baseball-player gets into bad company and learns that the racketeers play a far less sportsman-like if even more exciting game.

By HERBERT L. McNARY

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould

MANAGER MURPHY of the Romans yielded to the cries of the fans to *"Take him out."* He came out of the dugout and held up the game. The Roman pitcher tossed the ball to Coblenze on first, stuffed his rolled glove in a hip pocket and headed for the showers. The grizzled manager was calling in the new pitcher from the bull-pen—a broad-shouldered youngster. At last Tex Sneddon was being introduced to big league baseball.

Murphy detained him at third base.

"Sneddon, here's the shot I've been savin' you for. It's seven to nothing against us, and you've got nothin' to lose. Looks like the Grays got one of them streaks where all pitchers are cousins. But if you can stop 'em dead, you'll be the find we think you are."

Late in the previous fall Murphy had received a letter from an old friend of his now managing a Texas team.

"Buy Sneddon. He's got the speed of old Barney. Green as Killarney when I got him and as tough as any broncho to break. He's smart and learned fast, and I taught him plenty, but as for breaking him —well, that will be your job."

In the spring, Texas Sneddon, named for his native State, came as a godsend to the baseball writers trying to justify their stay at the Florida winter resort. He strode into camp wearing a sombrero, had an answer for every sally—and since in practice sessions he showed surprising speed, he soon monopolized sport writers' accounts. An enterprising scribe dug up a cowboy's outfit, and pictures were taken of Sneddon in the suit. Pictures were also taken of his shooting-irons, one of which was silver plated and possessed a notable history in Texas warfare, having come to Sneddon through inheritance.

Murphy found in the Texas lad a pitcher

of promise. He and the veteran catcher, Keady, worked on Sneddon to give him polish, teaching him the little things about foot-work and covering up and keeping runners close to the bag. Sneddon proved an apt pupil, albeit an obstreperous youngster who balked at discipline. And now he was making his big-league début.

HE kicked up the dirt around the pitching rubber until he felt satisfied with his footing, and waved the infielders away. He took his five pitches and then faced the first Gray batter. The batter, expecting a new pitcher to be a bit shy of control, waited Sneddon out but got in a hole and went after a bad ball which he popped to Coblenze. Sneddon worked the next batter to the count of two and two, and fooled him with a fast hook for the final out of the inning.

He continued to twirl steadily. His fast ball had a beautiful hop, and his change of pace and sharp-breaking curve kept the Grays from getting set long enough to measure his fast one. When they did connect, they hit under it and usually popped or flied out. And sprinkled generously through the Grays' batting order there showed a number of strike-outs.

Meanwhile the Romans kept pegging away at the seven-run lead. Single markers in four successive innings reduced the Grays' advantage to three runs, and then in the seventh Carrington cleared the sacks with a long double to left center and made the score 8 to 7 when he came over the pan himself on a single.

The Grays were a sore lot at seeing an almost certain game taken away from them, and tried their best to rattle young Sneddon. The good-looking dark-haired Texan did lose control for a few moments there in the eighth, but with the winning run on second and the tying run on third, he put the ball where Keady told him to. He fanned a Gray for the second out and forced the next man to fly to Daley in right. In the ninth he set the Grays down in order, and immediately became the center of a group of back-slapping Romans.

MURPHY watched through narrowed eyes. Keady came to the manager and began to remove his shin-guards.

"The kid's good, Murph."

Murphy grunted. "You called every ball, didn't you?"

"Sure, but he put it where I told him. Wish I could say the same for some of these other soup-servers."

The manager still kept his narrowed eyes on Sneddon. "Hope this don't go to his head. Remember what Dixon said about his being a wild youngster."

"Well, if he's no wilder outside the box than he is in," declared Keady as he kicked loose his left shin-guard, "we should get hot and bothered."

The newspaper accounts of the game eulogized Sneddon's pitching and proclaimed him to be the find of the pitching staff. One feature writer broke out in a fantastic vein of his being a two-gun man from the Texas bad-lands, one who would most certainly show courage under fire.

To test this courage, Murphy let Sneddon start against the Wolverines when they had their ace, Lefty Pine, carded to pitch. Tex matched the fast ball of his famous opponent with one just as fast and for seven innings the two pitched scoreless ball. Then in the seventh the Wolverines pushed over a run. In the eighth Sneddon came to bat with men on second and first and Murphy let him go up. With the count two and two on him Sneddon sliced a curve over first for a tricky two-bagger that sent both runners across the pan. Then Sneddon set the Wolverines down in the ninth.

Sneddon continued to provide some nice pitching and the Romans chose this period to hit on all nine cylinders. Many of the scribes and most of the fans attributed the "Rise of the Romans" to Tex Sneddon and this young Texan didn't set himself up as a modest violet. In addition to a pitching arm he disclosed a tongue capable of wise-cracks and it began to crack. The Romans had a colorful addition to the ranks, one who got into arguments, verbal and otherwise, with umpires, opponents, team-mates and people in general.

"I knew it!" groaned Manager Murphy at a business conference. "I no sooner get a guy that will relieve me of some of the worries on the field, than he turns out to be a bird what has me sleepless from trying to square him off the field."

"I suppose he'll be hittin' us up for a Babe Ruth salary next year," grunted Big Dan Caholan without taking a long black cigar from his mouth.

Big Dan was a silent partner in the Romans club—as he was in many other enterprises. His chief fame came from being the big shot in politics, and from politics and its allied professions he was

supposed to have cleaned up several millions. Of course everything said against and for a man like Dan Caholan is always greatly exaggerated, but he was unquestionably a powerful man physically and influentially. "See Dan Caholan," was the potent advice given to the desperate.

His were strong, heavy features and the whole face seemed to sag down toward the black jowls. He had alert, challenging brown eyes and a tracery of purple lines showed on his nose, like the markings on a banknote.

"Sneddon has already asked that I tear up his contract for this year and treble the figure in a new one. That sounds as if some one has been talking to him," grunted John J. Cousins, president of the Romans.

"Some one has," declared Big Dan. "He's been running around with some shady characters, Ratty Hyman and some of his chiselers. There's been a lot of queer stuff pulled off in this burg lately that I think can be traced to Ratty's gang. It shows how slick they are when even *I* can't get anything on 'em."

"Would they try to fix games?" asked Murphy.

"They'd try to fix the tides if they could lay bets on 'em," grunted Big Dan.

"I'll get after the kid again," promised Murphy.

MURPHY never postponed action. He no sooner got down onto the playing field where the Romans were going through their morning workout than he sought out Tex.

"Sneddon," he said, "you may not know it but you're runnin' around with some fast company nights."

"The friends I make outside the ball-park are my business," declared Sneddon belligerently.

"That's where you're wrong," Murphy shot at him. "Baseball has to protect itself. Let a guy get mixed in something shady and he's out of baseball for life. We'd be out of luck just as much as you would because we got an investment tied up in you."

"And how much do I get on that investment?" demanded Sneddon. "Three grand for pitching better ball than men on this team who are getting four and five times as much."

"And if you were to break your arm tomorrow you'd still be getting that three grand for six months' work. Not so bad for a youngster just turned twenty-one! Just 'cause you've turned in some good pitchin' with one of the smartest catchers in the game callin' the signals, don't take it for gospel that you'll make good."

"I've made good," shot Sneddon over his shoulder as he walked away. Assurance fathered the claim rather than egotism, and Murphy liked the youngster for it albeit he mumbled profanely as he looked after the tall youth.

Tex Sneddon spent the afternoon down in the bull-pen. He finished the session with a brief workout for he was scheduled to pitch against the Wolverines next day.

SNEDDON roomed with another pitcher new to the Romans that season, a southpaw named Jellison who had been used only as a relief twirler. He was a rather squat chap with reddish hair. Tonight he watched Sneddon doll up before the mirror in their modest hotel room.

"Out again tonight?" questioned Jellison. There was that in the tone that brought a scowl to Sneddon's boyish features.

"Yeah. Got any objections?"

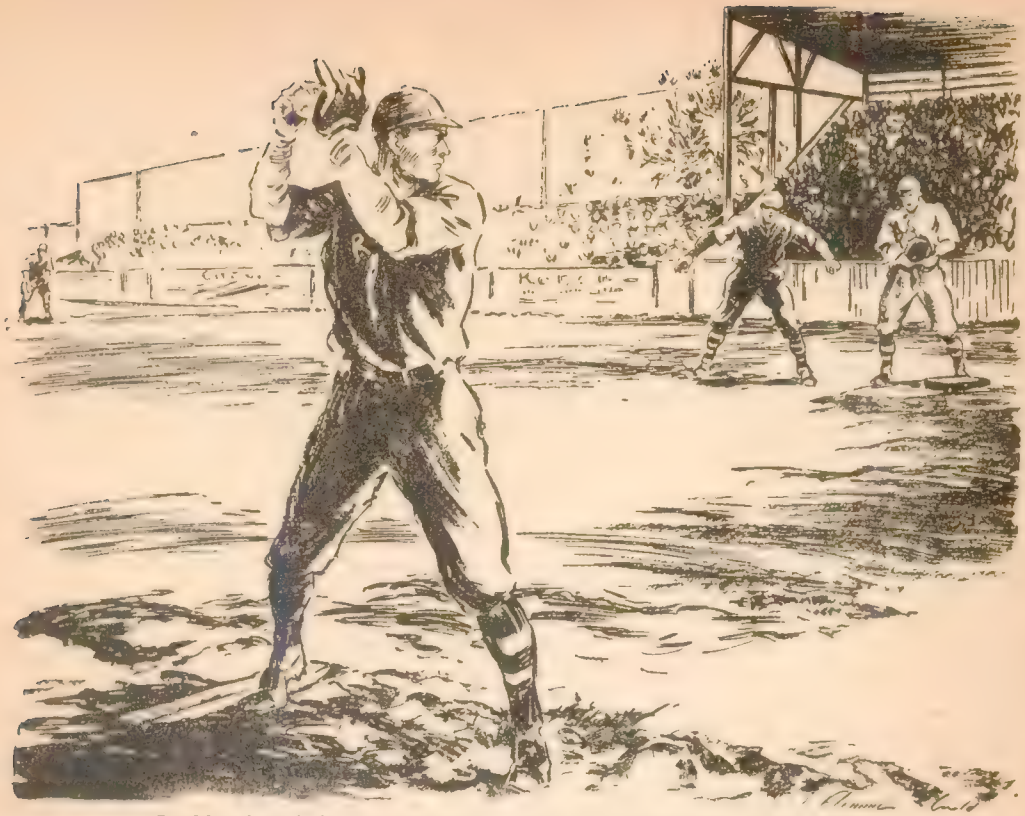
"It's not my funeral, Tex, but you're travelin' fast. You're down to pitch tomorrow."

Sneddon turned from the mirror. "Say, has Murph made you my nursemaid?"

The color mounted up Jellison's neck. "Nobody's makin' me a nursemaid, a stool pigeon or anything else," he declared vehemently. "I'm tryin' to tell you somethin' for your own good. You've been hittin' the hay after midnight for over a week steady and 'at aint perfume on your lips when you do come in. You're down to pitch tomorrow—" Jellison saw the expression on Sneddon's face and changed his tone. "Yeah, I'm just a relief pitcher an' you're the find of the season, but let me tell you somethin'. I've got six years on you, and I've been brought up in the city. I know the racket better than you do—"

"Yeah? Well I'm learnin' fast, and I like my teachers!" exclaimed Sneddon as he reached for a straw hat instead of the cap ball-players usually prefer.

Sneddon slammed the door behind him to drown out any parting shot Jellison might send after him. Why should he be razzed by a rookie, or even by Murph, and those other birds who were afraid to say what they thought? The Romans were climbing toward first place, and wasn't he the reason? Soon he would be in the company of some real guys who would tell him how



Sneddon fooled the batter with a fast hook for the final out of the inning.

good he was—Ratty Hyman, Frankie Belcher and some of the others who knew everyone worth knowing and spent money like water. Why shouldn't he capitalize his popularity and have a good time, since he couldn't have a good time on the lousy salary Cousins paid him? Of the two hundred and fifty dollars he received every month, Tex sent home a hundred and fifty. There was an invalid mother with financial difficulties at home. Tex never told anyone about home conditions—not that there was anything to conceal, but it wasn't like him to speak of such things.

THE absence of evening dress did not bar one from the Top Hat night-club. The men at Tex Sneddon's table were dressed informally; the girls wore flimsy party dresses of pastel shades. Ratty Hyman ran the party, although Sneddon was made guest of honor. Ratty wasn't as vicious looking as one might expect from his record and reputation but his countenance did justify the name that had been pinned upon him by the underworld. A sharp-pointed nose and beadlike black eyes gave him a rodent appearance. He was short and slender and affected tight-waisted suits that caused him to look slimmer than necessary.

Frankie Belcher was the name adopted by a thick-set Slav, the inseparable companion of Ratty. He had a round face, sandy hair and the flattened brows that come from unsuccessful experience in preliminary bouts. The other members of the party differed nightly and on this occasion included a dark-featured, nervous youth of Italian extraction called Tony—Sneddon couldn't remember his last name—and a rather neat-appearing middle-aged man named Masterson. Like the men of the party the personnel of the girls differed nightly, except in type. They were always show girls—or professed themselves as such. Tonight for variety Sneddon could look across at a girl with the black hair and sparkling eyes of a señorita and at a noisy jane with a wind-blown red bob. The seat at Tex's right was occupied by Betty Carruth.

Tex looked at her with unconcealed admiration. He had never dreamed a girl could be so beautiful. Betty was a silver blonde with gleaming wavy hair brushed back in a fashion that partly revealed her ears. Her profile was delicately traced as a cameo head and there was that cameo whiteness and purity about her and the suppleness of a slender sapling. He realized now that Betty was the real reason for his coming here tonight.

"'Lo, Betty," greeted Ratty. "Out to the park today to see the big boy?"

RATTY likewise knew why Tex had come tonight. It was Ratty's business to know such things. Ratty had a large slice in this night-club. Betty Curruth danced in the show. And Betty sat at this table under orders.

"Tex didn't pitch today," said Frankie Belcher. "He pitches tomorrow."

"That right, Tex?" asked Ratty. "You in the box tomorrow?"

"Yeah," answered Tex, but he was watching Betty, who had in turn studied Ratty and Frankie in a quick searching glance. It all transpired in a fraction of a second, a slight change of voice, a quick narrowing of eyes. Mysterious byplays of this nature happened frequently, disturbing the young Roman pitcher, who would color with angry embarrassment. Sometimes Betty appeared sincerely interested in him and then for some inexplicable reason she appeared coldly angry with him. Then he would intercept one of those eye messages from Ratty to Betty and the girl would become gayly friendly with him once more.

The Top Hat warmed up, but Tex failed to enthuse.

"It's too hot in here," declared Ratty. "What do you say if we slip out to a roadhouse for a few minutes?"

"I've got my show to do," protested Betty, the only dissenting voice. Tex remained noncommittal.

"After the show," said Ratty sharply.

"I'm tired. I got a rehearsal tomorrow."

"You can cut that. I'll fix it up." Ratty's eyes hardened. Betty shrugged her silken shoulders.

BETTY went along, but she sulked, varying the mood with occasional vivacious spurts when Ratty looked at her, but Tex knew only that she sulked. He realized vaguely that they had driven far out into the country, that it was after midnight, and that he had had too many cocktails, that all this displeased Betty and that he found a morbid pleasure in displeasing her more.

It was near four o'clock when Tex and Betty drove up to her apartment. For minutes she hadn't spoken and he matched her mood with a sulk of his own. He dismissed the cab and stepped into the hallway with her.

"Thanks for the enjoyable evening," he told her sarcastically.

"Don't mention it," she answered in kind.

"Say, what have you got against me?" he demanded abruptly.

"Nothing except yourself." She turned to go, but he had detected a catch in her voice and he saw her amber lashes flick suspiciously. He seized her arm and swung her about.

"Say, listen, Betty, come clean, will you? What's wrong with me?"

"What are you playing around with this bunch for?" she demanded.

"Why are *you?*"

"Because I have to. I've got to keep my job."

"Well, what's wrong with 'em? They're a good bunch of sports."

"Sports? Do you think Ratty is tossing away jack on you 'cause he likes you? For every buck that boy spends he expects ten back."

"Well, he can't get any from me."

"Oh, yeah? You're pitching today, aren't you? The odds are three to one on the Romans to win. What kind of shape are you going to be in this afternoon? But that's only part of it. Ratty is back of rackets that mean bucking Big Dan, and if you don't know who Big Dan is, he's part owner of the Romans, among other things, and Ratty's gettin' ready to fight Big Dan through you. Now go ahead and tell Ratty I put you wise, you big sap!" She tried to pull away, but Tex held her.

"What would happen to you if I did tell Ratty? Would you lose your job?"

"Lose my job?" She laughed bitterly. "That would be the easiest thing they would do to me—"

"Say, if they ever tried anything rough—"

"Oh, yeah? The big two-gun man from Texas comin' to my assistance! I can take care of myself. *You're* the one who needs a guardian! Let go my arm, will you?"

"I'll let go when I'm ready. So you've all been playin' me for a sap, huh? All the times you've been with me, all the times you've danced with me—you got paid for it, huh?"

"Sure I got paid for it." The blue eyes challenged the anger in his, but as that anger changed to an expression of hurt she unbent. She turned to pull away and Tex unloosed his grip and then tightened it again.

"Why do you have to make money this way?" he asked.

"Are you looking for a sob-story? Well, I got one. It's so original that you can smell the camphor a mile off—I've got a sick mother and young sisters to look out for." She pulled her arm away savagely.

"Get out of here!" she cried. "Go back to Texas. Go any place where I'll never see you again—you big sap!"

She turned and ran up the stairs and left Tex staring after her, bewildered.

TEX saw the night gray to dawn—or might have seen it had he cared to—before he reached his hotel room. Jellison, rousing, regarded him skeptically.

"Tex Sneddon in the pink for today's game," drawled Jellison.

"Oh, go bag your head," mumbled Tex as he rolled into bed.

"Try it yourself," advised Jellison, "only first see that the bag is filled with ice. It's soothin' for hangovers."

Sneddon warmed up on grit alone that afternoon and showed a fair assortment of stuff to the resentful Murphy. He went to the mound and for awhile got by all right, but about the fourth inning he tired and lost his stuff. His "swift" failed to hop and his "downer" couldn't find the corners. A barrage of hits in the fifth drove him from the hilltop. Murphy met him at the dug-out steps.

"Try sleepin' nights for a change," he snarled sarcastically.

Sneddon looked accusingly at Jellison, who had come in from the bull-pen to get some final instructions before replacing Sneddon on the mound. Jellison read Sneddon's thought.

"I didn't have to tell him," he asserted. "A blind man could see it."

SNEDDON left the park in a resentful attitude toward baseball and all connected with it. Later, over a fairly substantial dinner he began to see the Romans' angle of the affair. He hadn't been giving Murphy a break and in failing to do so he was only injuring himself. Betty was right to call him a sap. Well, he'd show her. He'd show them all. He was through with Ratty and his gang and the bright lights.

Later still he arrived at a new decision. He would see Ratty just once more and tell him he was through. He'd have a showdown with him. More likely the motivating impulse under this decision was the desire to see Betty again since he meant to look up Ratty at the Top Hat. But he intended to go prepared. He returned to his room. Jellison was not in. That pleased Sneddon because of the business he had in mind. He went to the trunk where he kept his guns. He couldn't find them—either the silver-plated gun or the other. He tossed his belongings into the trunk helter-skelter and then ransacked the room without finding his guns. They were gone. Jellison must have taken them, he told himself. That would be in keeping with his big-brother attitude—afraid that Sneddon would go on a spree and shoot up the town!

Sneddon went to the Top Hat minus his guns, but he retained his belligerent attitude. He found Ratty, Belcher and some of the others at their customary places. Now that the film of delusion had been swept from his eyes he saw them not as the men about town they had professed to be, but as the gangsters they really were. He dropped into a vacant seat.

"Hi," greeted Ratty over a highball, "the kid himself! Had a little tough luck today in the box, didn't you?"

"My tough luck was your good luck, I guess," Sneddon threw back at him.

"What do you mean?" Ratty's voice had chilled.

"I mean you kept me out last night deliberately so I would be in tough shape today, and you had plenty down that the Romans would lose."

"Yeah? Who's givin' you all this dope? Betty?"

Sneddon checked himself. He didn't want to implicate Betty, and cause her trouble.

"I haven't seen Betty or been in touch with her today," he evaded. "Don't you suppose Murphy was smart enough to see your game? I've got a roommate who knows what time I get in. Well, you wont pull that stunt again. I'm all washed up with you crooks."

"Oh, yeah?" retorted Ratty in that slow drawl. "We don't let guys we need walk out on us. When they try to, we put 'em on the spot."

"I'll shoot it out with anyone on the spot," declared Sneddon calmly.

"Listen, brother," cut in Belcher. "Dis aint one of them Western towns where you stage a duel on the main stem. We get you in the back here."

"Brave guys!" sneered Sneddon.

"Businesslike," corrected Ratty.

"Well, *I'm* walking out on you," declared the pitcher. "Try and stop me."

HE rose from the table. Belcher and the others made a concerted movement, but Ratty waved them back. Sneddon went out boldly and did not see Ratty signal to a man near the door.

Once on the street, Sneddon elected to walk. He failed to notice that a car with drawn curtains slowly followed him through the traffic. When Sneddon turned from the brightly illuminated artery into a comparatively dark street, the car sped around the corner and pulled up at the curb some distance ahead. Sneddon saw a man get out of the car and cross to a store window, but failed to place any significance on the action. He passed between the man and the car.

Suddenly he felt something round and hard pressed against the small of his back.

"Get in that car and don't try any monkey business, bo."

The door of the car opened, and Sneddon saw the gleam of metal. He saw that in an instant he could be riddled with bullets and left in the gutter while the car sped away. He got into the front seat next the driver.

"One yip out of you, and I'll blow the back of your head off."

Sneddon turned. By the light of a street-lamp he saw a sawed-off shotgun leveled at him, and he could make out the features of the man who held it—a pinched, swarthy face, with distended eyes and twitching nose. Coked to the eyes, evidently, with an unsteady finger on the trigger of that deadly weapon. . . . .

The car got under way and drove through side-streets, across the river and out into the suburbs. Sneddon wondered when his end would be. He hated to pass out without a battle, but the slightest move would invite instant death. While he lived there was hope.

The car pulled up alongside a small store at a word from one of the three in the rear. This man got out and went into the store. Minutes passed before he came out.

"Ratty says to meet him at the parkway and Brindsley Avenue," he told the driver as he climbed back into the car.

So Ratty was responsible for this "ride." He had certainly acted swiftly, thought Sneddon. A dangerous man. And Betty had to work for him!

The car moved slowly, and after a run of a half-hour or so drew up to the curb of the parkway just beyond a corner. The car waited there with motor running and no one talking. Sneddon was somewhat cheered by the thought that he was not to be executed just yet. Then he decided that Ratty was too shrewd to have him killed in this way. He would be afraid of being implicated.

Numerous cars passed along the parkway, but to these Sneddon's abductors paid no attention. Then a black closed car pulled in ahead of Sneddon and came to a halt. A man got out and came back. Sneddon recognized Ratty.

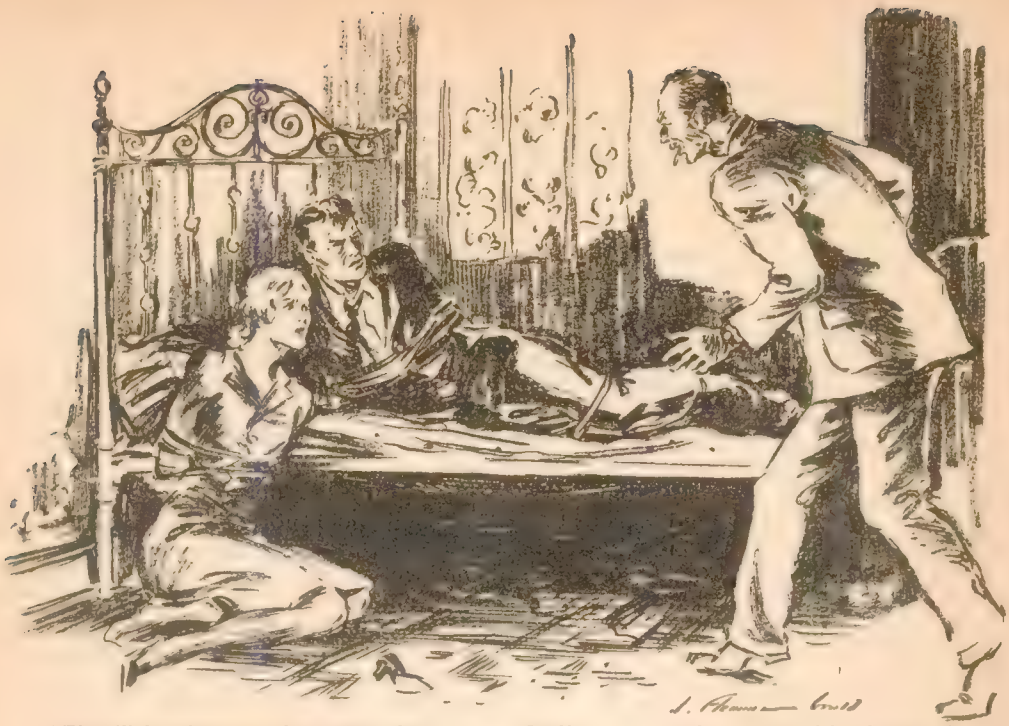
"Well," exclaimed Ratty, standing away from the runningboard on the road side of the car, "you see how we do things! It's a tough racket you bumped into. Even a two-gun Texan aint got a chance. Speakin' of guns, do you recognize this rod?"

He took a silver-plated gun from his pocket. Sneddon recognized it as his. It had been taken from his trunk.

"Yours, huh? I had a reason for getting it. It's the one they printed pictures of with the trainin'-camp stuff about you bein' tough and nasty. We're callin' on Big Dan Caholan t'night. Case you don't know who he is, he's part owner of the Romans, an' he's the political big shot who thinks he can tell me where to get off. He's got a cellar full of swell liquor. It's safe. Nobody would hi-jack Big Dan. Yeah? Well, here's one baby that's hi-jackin' him tonight. They'll be some shootin', and this gun will be accidentally left behind. Police and reporters will be on the job before Big Dan can shut 'em off. And what's Big Dan gonna do when the evidence implicates the Romans' star pitcher? Big Dan aint gonna do nothin'." Ratty put the gun back into his pocket.

"All right, Yipper, keep the cannon on him. Blow his nut off if he starts anything," he directed.

RATTY went forward to the other car, and then both cars moved along the parkway. After a run of a few miles they stopped before a driveway. Sneddon could see the outlines of a big house through the trees, and the orange oblongs of lighted windows. Five men got out of Ratty's car, and one from the seat behind Sneddon joined them. Sneddon saw Ratty pass out black masks which the men adjusted in the shadows of the shrubbery bordering the drive. A big truck rolled by; at a sign from Ratty it pulled into the side of the road, and two men jumped off the seat and began to inspect the motor as if in trouble. Ratty said something to his original group,



"There'll be plenty in the papers about the three of us t'morrow—only you two wont be alive to read it!"

and Sneddon saw them produce black automatics. The six masked hi-jackers moved stealthily up the drive.

Sneddon's fingers itched to get into action; he wanted to get at Ratty, to defeat the latter's plans, although the full scope of them was not yet apparent to the Texan. But he sat quietly in the seat beside the driver. He could almost feel on his neck the shotgun held by the cocaine-fiend behind him.

Sneddon heard shots near the house. Then he heard Ratty's voice:

"Back her in, Tony."

The truckmen leaped to the seat and swung the truck into the driveway in reverse. For many minutes Sneddon heard a medley of muffled sounds, sputtering motor, clinking glass and angry cursing. Then the truck started up, pulled out of the drive and headed back along the parkway. Several minutes of strange quietness passed, and then Sneddon heard a fusillade of shots, and the masked hi-jackers came running out of the driveway to leap into the cars, which immediately got under way.

They rode for a couple of hours before crossing back to the city. Then the cars stopped, and Ratty came back and stood near Sneddon.

"Big Dan will have his own methods of finding out who took his hooch," announced Ratty, "but that aint worryin' me. My ace in the hole is that already the district attorney's office, and the papers know about that gun of yours. That will mean publicity, the kind that Dan don't want. And we can spring it any time we want.

"And now get out of that car," directed Ratty. "The only reason you aint lyin' in a ditch is that you're still of more use to me alive than dead; but this little experience just shows you how easy it will be to bump you off whenever we want."

Sneddon got out quickly, but he turned on Ratty.

"Well, you'd better do your bumping now, because the first thing I'm goin' to do is to get me a gun and settle with you."

Ratty nonchalantly lit a cigarette.

"Try and find me. We settle things in gangs. One guy don't mean a thing. There'll always be some one around when you least suspect it to pump lead into you any time I give the word. Beat it while you're healthy."

Sneddon took a look at the ugly faces in the car where hands rested on guns all unknown to the casual pedestrians who sauntered by; then he turned and walked away. Gang methods—all strange to him—but he would fight back.

BEFORE Sneddon reached his hotel the newsboys selling the tabloid editions were already screaming scares about the

robbery. Sneddon found out from a hastily purchased copy that a male servant had been shot through the leg and taken to the hospital. The extracted bullet came from a revolver with a silver-plated butt that had been dropped in the excitement.

Sneddon went to his room feeling blue. Jellison was already asleep.

NEXT morning the papers carried amplified accounts of the robbery and hinted at the gangsters and political significance that lay behind a raid on the hitherto inviolate Big Dan. The Romans made the robbery the topic of conversation during the morning work-out, but Sneddon ventured no comment. Right after lunch he received a summons to the office. He found Big Dan there alone. Sneddon recognized him from the pictures of him that had been in the morning papers. Big Dan closed the door and they were alone. Then the politician took out a gun and laid it on the desk.

"Recognize that?"

"Yes," answered Sneddon. "It's mine. The papers printed pictures of it last March." His tone was even. It invited Big Dan to come to the point as quickly as possible.

"Where were you when this gun was fired at my servant last night?"

"Sitting in a car outside your driveway with a shotgun pressed to the back of my neck."

They looked long at each other.

"That's *your* story," declared Big Dan finally. "The point is not many would believe it."

"So I gathered from Ratty."

Big Dan's eyes seemed to snap.

"Oh, so it *was* Ratty, was it?"

"He seemed to think you'd find out quickly."

Big Dan's fingers drummed on the desk-top. His piggish eyes narrowed, his heavy jaws hardened.

"Why did they have to have a gun on your neck when you've been so friendly with Ratty and his gang of crooks?"

"I got picked up for a ride after I told Ratty last night what I thought of him. My guns were already stolen, or I'd have had them with me." Sneddon had dressed for lunch and now had on his street clothes. He reached to his belt and dropped a revolver on the desk.

"I'll have this the next time I meet Ratty," he stated quietly.

Big Dan barely glanced at the gun. "Throw it into the river," he grunted. "Wild West stuff is no go here. You don't know the rules. You leave Ratty to me. If you want to save your neck, you settle down and pitch some real baseball! Ratty's crowd has been directing a lot of wise money against the Romans winning the pennant. You attend to your pitching, and I'll attend to crooks. Then we'll both be in our proper fields," he added grimly.

When Sneddon went down to the ball-park, a messenger handed him a letter. Sneddon tore it open and read it.

Sorry. Understand. Lay off Ratty, or he'll get you. Don't try to see me or it will be dangerous for both of us. Sorry I called you a sap. Destroy this. —Betty.

UNCERTAIN as the letter was, it cheered Sneddon as nothing else had done in the past two days. The letter was uncertain because in asking him to "lay off Ratty" Sneddon suspected the letter might have been ordered by Ratty. However, he felt intuitively that this was a genuine message. That part requesting him not to see her hurt him, and yet he realized how necessary it was. He had reason enough to respect the gangster's methods. They were something menacing, sinister, that operated in the dark and Sneddon knew not how to combat it. But Betty's letter helped. He sought out Murphy.

"How's chances of workin' today?" he asked the manager.

Murphy's glance was steely. "Go down in the bull-pen. I may need you."

Sneddon warmed up in the bull-pen while the Romans battled through an uncertain game. The lead shifted several times. Going into the ninth, the Romans led five to four, but the Blues filled the bases with none out on a hit, a bad error and a pass. Murphy called in Sneddon. The first batter hit sharply back to the box, and Sneddon made a neat play on the ball and forced the man at home. He made the second man go after a bad ball and foul to Coblenze on first, and the final man sent a long fly to center which Carrington pulled down. Sneddon received no official credit for the game, but he felt heartened by the showing.

AUGUST found the Romans out in front with what appeared to be a commanding lead. But the team began to slip, and the Grays came fast. With the exception

of Sneddon, the Roman twirling staff consisted of veterans whose arms began to weaken under the strain. In his eagerness to make good, Sneddon had been pitching twice a week and winning consistently, but in August the breaks went against him. The Roman hitters went into a slump, and games went into the loss column by the margin of a run or two. A flock of double-headers just about ruined the twirling staff. Meanwhile the Grays cleaned up on double-headers, and Labor Day found them right on the heels of the pace-making Romans.

The two teams battled through September. Murphy called on the strong young Texan again and again, and Sneddon came through. Sneddon would start a game, and if the Romans piled up an early lead, Murphy would take Sneddon out and shoot him back again the following day. Against the Grays at the latter's home park just when the Grays expected to go into the lead Sneddon won the first game of a Saturday double-header five to two and then came back in the second game and repeated with an eight-to-six victory.

A mob of happy fans were at the station to greet the Romans and Tex Sneddon in particular. Had this been a month or two before the fans would have found a cocky, happy youngster reveling in the demonstration, but now the surging fans merely got a glimpse of a serious-minded young man who slipped away through a cordon of policemen.

HE was hardly back at his room, starting to unpack when the phone rang for him. A whining voice came over the wire.

"Sneddon? Ratty wants the Grays to cop the flag. You're the main obstacle. You know what he c'n do to obstacles, so be a wise guy and get a lame arm or sumpin' if you know what's good fer you." The speaker hung up.

Sneddon decided his best move was to consult Big Dan. The next day he got in touch with the boss and the latter came up to the park. Sneddon told him about the threat, and asked if he should go to the police about it.

"Police? Hell, no," snorted Big Dan. "Ratty's just bullin' you. He wont pull any rough stuff. So long as gangsters kill each other, the police and the public are secretly satisfied, but if anything happened to you now, the whole city would turn on every gangster and racketeer in the city, and they would turn on Ratty. He knows it. He's under cover now, and he'll pay through the nose eventually, but that eventually would be today if every racketeer lost his graft."

"Then I would be doing the public a service," reminded Sneddon with a wry smile, "if I was to get bumped off."

"You pitch winning baseball," declared Big Dan. "Leave Ratty to me. He'll try to get your goat some more, but don't let him."

However, Big Dan had Sneddon move to a new hotel and accept a roommate who became his bodyguard. Sneddon objected, but Big Dan never listened to objections. Ratty continued to go after Sneddon's goat by telephone calls and written warnings, until one night Sneddon packed his gun and slipped his bodyguard. He hopped a taxi and went to the Top Hat.

SNEDDON forced his way to a conspicuous table near the dance-floor and sat down. Of course Ratty wasn't in sight. Sneddon should have foreseen that. However, his pent-up feelings demanded some kind of a jam, a fist-fight, shooting—anything as long as it brought the warfare out into the open.

If he didn't see Ratty, he did see Betty. She sang within a few yards of him. But when he caught her eye, she sent him a frightened glance warning him not to recognize her. He watched hungrily. She was as pretty as ever—prettier. He wondered at her connection with Ratty, but felt relieved because of a remembered bit of conversation that Ratty was too wise to take a personal interest in women.

Betty sang her songs and encores and departed. Soon afterwards a waiter came to pour some water into Sneddon's glass, and he surreptitiously dropped a note in Sneddon's lap.

"Betty," whispered the waiter and moved away. Unostentatiously Sneddon unfolded the bit of paper:

Leave quickly. You are in danger here. Love.

—*"Love."* His heart leaped. He wasn't a sap, then—and she cared! He had a wild desire to shoot up the place, to fight it out with every gunman in sight. But who were the gunmen? His gaze swiftly swept the tables. Men in evening dress and men dressed informally, some with women and some alone, some pasty-faced and some swarthy—lights that could go out in an instant, hidden rods that could bark in the

dark. Sneddon paid his check and departed.

He hailed a cruising taxi near the door and hopped in before the car came to a stop. Two blocks away another taxi drew alongside. An arm appeared at the window, and Sneddon heard the blast of an explosion and the crash of glass as a bullet crashed through the window of the car he was in. The other taxi sped away, while Sneddon's frightened driver refused to budge an inch.

Sneddon quickly hailed another taxi and returned to his hotel, there to find Big Dan awaiting him to administer a tongue-lashing that was a classic.

Sneddon often wondered if Murphy or the other Romans knew about his entanglement with Ratty. Apparently not. The trouble concerned Sneddon and Big Dan alone. Murphy especially had worries enough jockeying the Romans to a pennant. The series with the Grays had set that team back only temporarily. The Grays were scheduled to return the visit with a four-game series that was to close the season—and decide the pennant, for when they came they had cut the margin to but a one-game lead.

"I'm going to start you in the first game, Sneddon," Murphy told him. "If we can get a good lead, I'll pull you out and shoot you in for the second game. However, go as easy as you can. I may have to send you back in the final game."

JUST before the important game an usher brought a sealed envelope down to Sneddon. Sneddon hoped it might be from Betty, but was severely disappointed. A brief message was printed in pencil on cheap paper.

"There will be fifty rods trained on you in the park, and if the Grays don't win God help you."

Big Dan was in the office, so Sneddon excused himself and brought him the note. Big Dan shifted a cigar and read the message.

"Bunk!" exclaimed Big Dan. "Just a bluff to get you rattled. Don't think I've been doin' nothing. I've got a flock of dicks in the park, and they'll spot any gangster Ratty tries to send in."

But Sneddon didn't feel completely reassured. He had a mental picture of that coke fiend who had handled the shotgun the night he had been taken for a ride. It seemed easy enough to plant maniacs like him in the stand who could take a shot at him as he left or came back to the dugout. Not a pleasant thought to carry into a game in which he was to have enough worries as it was.

Sneddon showed the effects of the strain under which he labored. He walked the first Gray to face him. He couldn't make the ball behave and a sacrifice and a hit brought over a run. He filled the bases before he retired the side. Carrington tied the score in the second with a home run, but Wenz, the Grays' slugger, parked one of Sneddon's hooks in the same place. Neither team scored again until the lucky seventh when the Romans pushed around the tying run. The ninth inning came and went and Sneddon found an added burden placed on his pitching that for more than a month had been doing iron-man service. And then in the eleventh with two out and nothing expected, Daley stretched a long hit into a double and Coblenze clicked the next ball between center and right to win the game.

According to Ratty, Sneddon had signed his death-warrant in winning the game, but he forgot all about that in the celebration staged by the Romans in the clubhouse. He had a grim reminder, however, when he started to leave the park. Silent, drably dressed men fell in around him and hustled him out to a closed car. Four men got in the car with him and he looked back and saw that another closed car followed close behind. Big Dan was protecting him. When he got to his hotel he was hustled up to his room and there told by his bodyguard that he was to eat his dinner in his room. Although Sneddon realized that all this attention was for his own good it galled him—he felt as if he were running away, whereas he wanted to fight back.

ABOUT ten o'clock that night as he sat reading, a bullet crashed through the window and buried itself high in the wall. Sneddon's bodyguard looked at the hole in the plaster and casually observed that they might as well douse the light and go to bed.

The next two days Sneddon passed restless sessions on the bench and saw his teammates lose both games. The Grays had now tied the Romans for the lead, with the one deciding game to be played on the morrow. It was a foregone conclusion that Sneddon would start for the Romans.

Next morning Big Dan himself aug-

mented the bodyguard that hovered about Sneddon until the time came to go to the park. He was there when a taxicab-driver brought in a message for Sneddon. According to the driver, a man had given him the letter and five dollars to deliver it. Big Dan tried to take the letter, but Sneddon angrily grabbed it.

"If you want to know, I aint got a dollar down on the Romans! To my mind, the Grays are the best bet today. You got yourself into this mess. I didn't pick Ratty as a playmate for you. If it wasn't for the protection I've given you, more protection than even you know about, you'd 'a' been feedin' daisies long ago. I don't go round

McCabe was off with the crack of the bat and slid in ahead of the throw home.

He read it at one glance. It said curtly:

Have got Betty a prisoner. If the Romans win, she dies first. Then you next. —Ratty.

"Look at that," cried Sneddon, beside himself with despair as he thrust the message at Big Dan. "Ratty's got Betty."

"Who's Betty?" demanded Big Dan as he rolled a cigar in his mouth.

"She—she's the one person who means more to me than anything else."

Big Dan took the note to the window and read it.

"Leave this to me," he stated calmly.

"Leave it to you?" cried Sneddon. "That's all I have been doing. And what the hell good are you? You cooped me up like a man in a death-cell. You don't care what happens to me or Betty or anyone else, so long as you win a few lousy dollars on a baseball game."

Big Dan took the cigar out of his mouth and thrust his head forward belligerently.

tellin' you nor anyone else my business, but I've done plenty to Ratty. I've killed every racket he's got a finger in. I've busted up his gang so's he aint got five left he can count on. I've had him hidin' out for weeks, an' he knows sooner or later I'll get him. This shows he's desperate. It's another bluff; or if it's on the level, it may be the means of runnin' him down. Foolin' with a dame is the way they all give themselves the leg. What's this Betty's last name?"

"Carruth," answered Sneddon, somewhat mollified. "She sang at the Top Hat."

"I know her," stated Big Dan. "Keep under cover till you hear from me."

IT was because messages were expected from Big Dan that a bright-eyed street urchin ran the gantlet of Big Dan's men and knocked on Sneddon's door. The pitcher's companion was in the bathroom

at the time with door shut, and the noise of running water shut him off from outside sounds.

"A lady t'rew dis to me out de winder," explained the youngster, and handed Sneddon an envelope.

Another message from Ratty, thought Sneddon as he tore it open. He read:

Ratty has me locked up here at 21 Cumberland Street. Help me. Don't trust the police. —*Betty.*

And in the envelope were several strands of Betty's easily recognized ash-gold hair.

"How did you get this?" Sneddon excitedly demanded of the youngster.

"I seen a lady's hand wavin' to me out de winder, an' when I went over she dropped dis letter. I thought if I brought it here you'd give me some dough. Gee, are you Tex Sneddon?"

"Yeah. Here." Sneddon shoved a bill into the dirty little paw. "Wait down in the street for me."

He shoved the kid out and then listened at the closed bathroom door. The sound of running water still continued. Sneddon stepped out into the hall. A plain-clothes man standing in the hallway glanced over sharply.

"Ed wants you," explained Sneddon. The man entered the room, and Sneddon darted down the hall. He hurried down the rear stairway and left the hotel by the side entrance. He had enough of leaving things to Big Dan. This was one affair he'd handle himself!

Bareheaded, he ran around the corner to the front of the hotel and saw the youngster. He hustled him into a cab and told the driver: "Cumberland Street."

AFTER a ride of about ten minutes through a congested tenement section the cab pulled up at a curb.

"Cumberland Street, buddy," said the driver. "Where next?"

But Sneddon paid him and got out. The boy pointed out the house from which he said the note had been dropped. It was a three-story brick house differing in no particular from its neighbors, a row of which formed a solid block. Now that he was here, thought Sneddon, what was he to do next?

While he deliberated, a black-haired Greek brushed by him carrying a napkin-covered restaurant tray. He turned in at the door of Number 21. Sneddon sprinted after him.

"It's all right; I'll take it." He shoved a bill at the Greek and took the tray. A moment later the door opened, and Sneddon quickly stepped in.

"Look out—grab him!" some one yelled from the stairs. Sneddon dropped the tray, but as he did, the man at the door leaped for him. Coming in out of the bright street into this dark hallway, Sneddon was at a disadvantage. As he groped with his assailant, he heard the rush of footsteps. Something hit him on the head, and all went black before him.

SNEDDON awoke with his head throbbing and his body constricted. He accounted for some of this stiffness when he discovered his arms and legs to be bound. He was on a bed, gazing at a cracked ceiling and faded wall-paper. The room was bright with the flood of noonday sunlight.

"Tex."

He rolled over on his side.

"Betty!"

He saw her sitting on a battered chair, her arms behind her.

"You all right?" she asked anxiously.

"Except that they got me tied up. You tied too?"

"Yes. They tied my arms when they brought you in. Oh, why did you come alone?"

"Your note said not to trust the police."

She winced. "Oh! I meant I appealed to you and not direct to the police because *I* didn't trust them. I've known Ratty to have business with too many of them, and now—" She came over and crouched by the side of the bed. Her voice sank to a whisper: "He's pretty desperate. He's been hittin' the dope bad. Big Dan's got him on the run."

As if he heard his name, Ratty pushed open the door and leered at them. Several days' growth of beard was on the rodent face, and his eyes were wild and bloodshot.

"Dropped right into my little nest!" he cackled in a shrill voice. "Well, you pair of love birds will go out together, and I'll toss you right on Big Dan's lawn."

"When you see Big Dan, you'll be cashing in," stated Sneddon defiantly. "He'll be here any minute."

A cloud of hate passed over Ratty's face.

"Big Dan will never find me here. I got my own ways of getting out of this house. When he comes, he'll run into a machine-gun nest. I'll let you live to see it."

Ratty glanced at his wrist-watch.

"It's after two now—and the big game starts at two-thirty. There'll be plenty in the papers about the three of us t'morrow—only you two wont be alive to read it."

He went out, slamming the door.

"I'm sorry," Betty said to Sneddon. "I got you into this."

"*You* got me!" he protested. "I'm to blame." He twisted savagely at his bonds. "Oh, if I could only get free."

"Wait," she cautioned in a whisper. She went to the door and listened for a moment; then she came over to the bed again.

"I found a razor-blade in the dresser. That's how I cut the hair I sent to you. I hid it under the matting."

She got down on the floor near where the shabby oil-cloth met the baseboard beside the chipped white dresser. She had to fish around with her hands behind her, and the task was discouraging, but finally she uttered a cry of satisfaction. "Here!"

Betty and Sneddon stood back to back while Betty patiently began another difficult and aggravating task of cutting his bonds. Finally they severed, and he quickly cut hers and then the cord about his ankles. He was free. He looked toward the two windows, but Betty anticipated him.

"They're nailed so that they'll lift only a few inches, and if you break the glass they'll hear you."

Of course his gun was gone. He went to the door. He could hear voices.

Suddenly his meditations were shattered by the blast of firearms. Bullets crashed through the window, and he could hear them smashing through street-door glass and wood. He heard cries inside and out, and then the roar of machine-gun fire downstairs and above. He reached over and pulled Betty close to the wall, for the bullets were showering plaster all about them.

Sneddon had only bluffed when he told Ratty that Big Dan was on the way. Big Dan had predicted as much, but it had been a wild guess on Sneddon's part. Yet he had hit on the truth. By working on the disappearance of Betty Carruth, Big Dan had through his own expert methods at last unearthed the hiding-place of Ratty and his few remaining satellites. And Big Dan came prepared for action.

BULLETS thudded into the house, and bullets answered them. Sneddon and Betty heard a sharp explosion below them that almost knocked them to the floor. A draft of air swung open the door. The battle waged louder.

"They've blown in the front door," explained Sneddon to Betty.

Their door opened wider, and a man looked in. The swing of the door hid Sneddon and Betty. They saw first the black automatic and the arm that held it.

Sneddon made a flying leap for the gun and knocked it to the floor, the man falling as the door hit him.

The gangster let a yell out, leaped to his feet and lunged for Sneddon, who had retrieved the gun. Sneddon met his charge and rushed him through the door out into the hall. Gangsters, manning a machine-gun at the landing, turned to fire, but Sneddon hurled his man into them and knocked them sprawling. At the same time he got the automatic set in his hand and blazed away at men who fired at him. In a tangled mass, both machine-gun and men went toppling down the stairs into the direct fire of those outside.

Sneddon heard a cry of rage above him and lifted his head in time to see a figure leaning over the railing of the flight above with an automatic trained on him. Sneddon fired from the hip; the man toppled over the rail, fell almost at Sneddon's feet and rolled down the stairs after his companions. Tex had caught a glimpse of the face. It was Ratty.

Sneddon ran back to the room where Betty was still pressed to the wall, and snatched a pillowcase from the bed. Then, keeping close to the wall, he crept to the smashed window and thrust out the white cloth. Firing ceased, and Sneddon ventured to expose himself. He saw three autos in the street, with men barricaded behind them. Big Dan appeared.

"Hey," called Sneddon, "I think they are all cleaned up."

Cautiously the riot-squad ventured into the house, and met no resistance. Those who had been firing from above had slipped through a connecting door into the next house and had made their escape.

That was the route Ratty expected to take—but Ratty was the one who would be unable to read the next day's papers!

"How did you get here?" was Big Dan's angry greeting to Sneddon.

"Got a message from Betty, but they jumped me here."

"And you missed the game," grunted Big Dan.

"What time is it?" asked Sneddon.

"Nearly three—started a half-hour ago."

"It isn't finished yet. Rush me to the park. Come on, Betty."

SNEDDON warmed up under the stands with the score-board showing the Grays leading one to nothing in the third.

Bowman went to bat for the Roman pitcher, Whitman. With the count two and two on him, he slapped the next one to left for a double. Haley moved him along on an out, and Carrington brought Bowman in with the tying run on a long fly. Daley flied out, and the teams changed. Tex Sneddon stepped out of the dugout. He turned to get a final word from Murphy and then glanced up at Betty with a smile. A cheer of hope went up from the fans as the big Texan went out to the mound.

Sneddon pitched as if it were the last game of his career. He put something on every ball, and baffled the batters with his change of pace and sharp-breaking hook. Collins, for the Grays, pitched just as effectively. True, the Romans got men on base, but they couldn't push them around. Both teams played for one run, relying on the old sacrifice.

In the sixth inning Parker for the Grays led off with a double, and things looked bad for the Romans. The next man sacrificed. Then Crasco, an easy out, and the batter reached first safely, but the runner did not attempt to make home. Murphy ordered Sneddon to fill the bases. Then Sneddon forced the next batter to ground to Haley for a fast double play.

Sneddon showed evidence of tiring as the game progressed, but the old heart held out, and he continued to bear down, pitching himself out of holes in both the seventh and eighth. In the last of the eighth Murphy sent up McCabe to pinch-hit for Keady, and he responded by poling out a long double. Sneddon was next at bat. It seemed that Murphy might send in another pinch-hitter, but he sent Sneddon to bat with instructions to bunt and sacrifice McCabe along.

Sneddon went after the first ball and fouled it. The next looked like a ball, but the umpire called it a strike, putting Sneddon in a hole. Murphy still had time to send in a pinch-hitter. Mencken, down in the bull-pen, was warming up briskly. Sneddon had been tiring. Sneddon looked toward the bench. Murphy signed for him to stay at bat. Sneddon looked over the dugout. Betty smiled encouragingly and waved. Sneddon took a new grip on his bat. The Grays' pitcher hooked two near the plate, but Sneddon refused to go after them. Then the pitcher tried to slip over a fast ball, but Sneddon swung hard, and the ball shot between first and second. McCabe was off with the crack of the bat and slid in ahead of the throw home, making the score two to one. The fans went wild and hardly noticed the next batter fly out.

But the game wasn't over. The Grays threw in their pinch-hitters in their half of the ninth. As frequently happens when a pitcher works too hard, Sneddon lost his man and walked him. He tried to keep the next batter from bunting, and walked him too. The next batter laid a bunt toward third, and Sneddon pounced on it and threw to third for a force-out, but Fraser missed the bag in lunging for the ball. The bases were filled with none out. A fly would tie the game, and a hit would bring in the winning run. Silence settled over the Roman fans. Mencken, in the bull-pen, looked in expectantly, while McCabe and Sneddon conferred.

Sneddon kept the ball low and fast, with the infield drawn in. The Grays batter hit a fast grass-cutter that Crasco took on the run, juggled for a heart-breaking moment and then pegged home for a force-out. Again Sneddon kept the ball low, and the batter topped a tricky bounder toward the box. Sneddon scooped it on the run and just beat the runner for another force-out at the plate. With the fans cheering wildly, Sneddon forced the last batter to loft a long fly that Carrington camped under with such ease that Sneddon was on the way to the dugout and the box behind it before the ball settled into Carrington's glove.

THE happy fans poured out of the grandstand exits to converge on Sneddon, but he beat them to the dugout. Betty was at the rail to meet him, her face suffused with delight.

"Tex, you were wonderful!"

"Thanks, Betty," he exclaimed hurriedly. "Betty, you'll have the same seat for the World's Series, and after that—well, how'd you like to meet my ma—and a preacher friend of mine?"

The color began to creep up the ivory column of her neck.

"I'd love to, Tex."

And then the first wave of joyous fans engulfed him.

A stirring story of the war in the air and behind the enemy lines—by the author of "Caissons Front!"

"I am Sollen, a ship's steward," Peter said calmly.

The Spy Pilot

By KINGSLEY MOSES

Illustrated by John Hamilton Fyfe

IT seemed singularly inappropriate that so trim a soldier as Sergeant (first class) Allen should be saluting the greasy youth who peered at him from the cockpit of the tiny pursuit plane.

"Captain Callendar's compliments, sir. And will the Lieutenant step into the Intelligence Officer's quarters immediately?"

"Dog-gone!" Lieutenant Peter Marleigh returned the salute. He was smeared like a modern Marathon swimmer with the grease a defective oil-gauge on his Nieuport had just squirted all over his vicinity. This summons meant leaving the job just as he'd got hold of the trouble, going to his own quarters and getting all cleaned up: damned nuisance! But Captain Callendar had him faded: two silver bars to one.

"Inside ten minutes, Sergeant."

Sergeant Allen permitted himself an almost friendly smile. The veteran regular had as little use for aviators as had most old-timers—boy-scout soldiers, these flyers were; didn't know the difference between Squads Right and Parade Rest. But Lieutenant Peter Marleigh was something else again. Six enemy planes to his credit already. Play that on your pianola!

FOR the benefit of the German prisoner, who sat very stiffly on a rickety cane-bottomed chair opposite Captain Callendar, Pete Marleigh remembered to salute as he entered the Intelligence Officer's den.

"See what the cat dragged in, Pete," grinned the Captain, who had so lately been transplanted from a newspaper desk to the army that he still insisted on wearing the visor of his garrison cap on his nose, like a green eye-shade. "It's very willing to talk—provided we feed it quickly, as promised. But I don't *sprech* Dutch, and it doesn't *habla* English. I reckon you're Papa's bright boy prodigy."

Major Caverly, from his chair in the corner, nodded. "Pump 'im, Pete. He has somethin' to say about that sewer known as the Aire River. And there has been talk, you know, about the Krauts minin' under it, and giving most of the lads in our 28th a free ride to heaven."

Pete Marleigh was from Philadelphia himself. His elder brother Larry was captain of a Delaware County company. Of all the doughboy divisions, Pete naturally had the Pennsylvania 28th most at heart. For about the first time in his life young Pete was grateful to his parents for their finicky notion that he be educated in a Swiss school—previously he'd thought it only a confounded outrage to cut him off from his native football and baseball. But he had learned to talk German perfectly. So now he poured down a verbal barrage of gutturals on the prisoner.

That stolid Saxon had had much the appearance of a low-bred bulldog being scolded. His mouth was stubborn, but his

eyes were scared. Pete wondered when he'd turn over on his back and wave his paws in the air. But now the dough-colored face lighted up delightedly. *"Ja, mein Herr! Ja, mein Herr! Ja, mein Herr!"* popped at regular intervals.

"Tell him to put on another record. He'll wear that one out," suggested the Major.

Abruptly the German did. *"Nein!"* cracked the monosyllable.

Pete only went after the man harder. His words crackled and snapped like a brush-fire. No use.

"He's either dam' dumb, or smart as the devil," Pete had to admit finally. "He says there isn't such a thing as a mine anywhere near the Argonne Forest. But he says it too often. You know: 'Lady doth protest too much' stuff, as the Bible says."

"Shakespeare, infant," corrected his major. "But I think you've got the right hunch, at that. When a man tells me a thing once I believe him; when he tells me twice, I begin to wonder. When he says it three times, I know he's lying."

The editor-intelligence-officer—who, however short of military science, had plenty of horse sense—said softly: "Tell him we're going to give him to the Australians to be taken care of."

Pete grinned delightedly at the bright idea. He knew the reputation of those gaunt, practical giants from the antipodes.

The Major's suggestion, as passed on by Pete, certainly had the desired effect. Horror glazed the dull Saxon's eye. *"Ach—nein!"* he spluttered, forgetting his manners and gesticulating frantically. Then he had plenty to say.

"That'll be about enough," said Lieutenant Marleigh finally. "Take it away and feed it!" Still prayerful, the prisoner was hustled out.

"IT comes to this, I reckon," said Peter. "He really thinks they are driving a mine right under the Aire. But he doesn't know for sure, hasn't actually seen it himself. But he's an engineer—sapper, you know. And that's the story in his corps."

"We'll relay the glad news to brigade. See what they choose to do about it. Really, it's no skin off our nose," the Major sagely pointed out. "We don't dig: we fly—when we get any planes to fly in. But what with these washed-out ice-wagons with not enough compression—"

Peter went back to the eternal job of trying to keep at least three of the six machines in his flight in commission. But the tale of the mine beneath the Aire River kept nagging at his consciousness all day. Suppose they got Larry? Best guy in the world! Well, maybe brigade would dig up something; maybe, again, they wouldn't. Pete Marleigh hadn't any high esteem for the desk outfit. He wished he could do something himself. "Cripes, why not?" he exclaimed suddenly.

THAT evening, long after all the other officers of the squadron were snoring, Lieutenant Pete Marleigh was still arguing in the Major's quarters.

"You know what it means if they get you, Pete." He shook his head, where already gray showed about the temples. Major Caverly was the typical field-artillery officer, so many of whom transferred to what had been earlier known as the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps; and which was just, at this late date, becoming the Air Service. He was long and lean and very hard-boiled, but not at all too hard-boiled to realize how extremely valuable is one really competent flyer. Doughboy lieutenants might be expendable—like shoestrings and cakes of soap; but a first-class pilot, a fighter with six enemy planes to his credit! "Forget it, Pete." He passed the bottle. "If you slip up, it wont be even a decent firing-squad. It'll be a rope round your neck. A mean way to go out, Peter."

"There was Nathan Hale, Major." He helped himself to the Boulestin. "But never mind that. I wont fluff it."

"We can't spare you. Not with this push we think is comin' on in a few days. We'll need every bird who isn't afraid to get both feet off the ground."

"Oughtn't to take me more'n two-three days at the longest. Let me talk to His Nibs, Major. I can sell him."

"Damn it! Enemy mines aren't our business."

"My brother's got an outfit in the 28th."

"Well," answered Major Caverly slowly, "my kid brother got it between the eyes at Cantigny. No business in a real battle—sophomore at Harvard, he was. Hell! Go on. Tell the regimental adjutant to let you talk to the old man—in the morning." Caverly rose, extended his hand. "More power to you, Peter. But I hope to gosh he turns you down."

The brigadier did not turn down Lieutenant Marleigh, however. But no one except the General himself, and of course,

Major Caverly, knew anything at all of the boy's daredevil project.

Sergeant Allen, however, had the grace to be actually surprised at the appearance of his pet officer when Peter arrived at the Nieuport hangars just at midnight. The Lieutenant was dressed in what appeared to be dark civilian trousers, and a coat that resembled a sailor's reefer—just what it was, in fact, hastily requisitioned from the navy battery which had mounted its battleship guns on flat-cars.

"Beggin' the Lootenant's pardon, but you're takin' a big chance out o' uniform thataway, sir. An' for the luvva Mike, what's the birds for?"

"Sergeant," answered Peter, his face barely visible in that starlit, moonless silence, "a great man once said: 'The things I don't say cause me the least trouble.' "

"Hum," said Sergeant Allen, displeased. He deeply deprecated the slovenly costume which many of the young flyers affected. The Sergeant had never appeared in public with so much as a button missing in fifteen years. And the birds—pigeons in a plane! What was the world coming to? Like so many of his kind, Sergeant Allen was convinced that this war had just about ruined the United States Army.

The Lieutenant refused to wear his helmet, either. Nor did he even glance at the chamber of his machine-gun. Lacking direct information, the Sergeant decided that this hop was to be some mad experiment in launching carrier pigeons from a flying plane. "They'll cut off their heads, or bust their wings against the wires, sir," he volunteered.

If Peter, in the roar of his starting motor, said anything, it was inaudible to the perturbed non-com. Then the chocks were yanked away; the Nieuport started rolling.

Sergeant Allen stood and watched the tiny speck sweep up against the stars. What was the sense of sending out a pursuit plane at midnight? There was not light enough to see to fight: a Nieuport is precious little use for observation! And as for releasing pigeons at one hundred miles an hour or more—"The Major's a soldier, all right, all right," the Sergeant mumbled to himself. "But I think he's got a bit soft behind the ears himself since he turned into a flyer."

The tiny plane climbed steadily, crossed the lines at twenty thousand feet. The Germans probably heard it. But in that misty starlight it was as invisible as a mosquito; and the Archies never even coughed at it. All of which suited Peter Marleigh perfectly. He aimed to attract no attention whatsoever. His plan was to follow the Meuse to that point, just over the Belgian border, where it turned abruptly and ran due south. He would go then west, exactly eight kilometers.

Keeping one's course at night over war-torn country is a desperately difficult job. There are not even the lights of towns to help you; and at any altitude, even forests are indistinguishable from plowed fields. All the earth is a vague, wan gray. Peter put most reliance in the stars. He kept the snout of his machine almost midway between Polaris and Vega. Peter had always been interested in stars; he had, merely from curiosity, he alleged, taken the pains to work out the stars' position for tonight with the meteorological officer.

BUT the lone flyer knew where he was heading. He had seen that haystack-dotted field more than once, returning from combat. Of course he couldn't know how level it was; but at least it would be open, untrapped by overhead wires. He couldn't afford to maneuver around above it with his motor on, of course, even in the dark. You couldn't tell how many hundreds of the Krauts might be bivouacked in the vicinity. Gliding with a dead stick, he must worm his way between the haystacks.

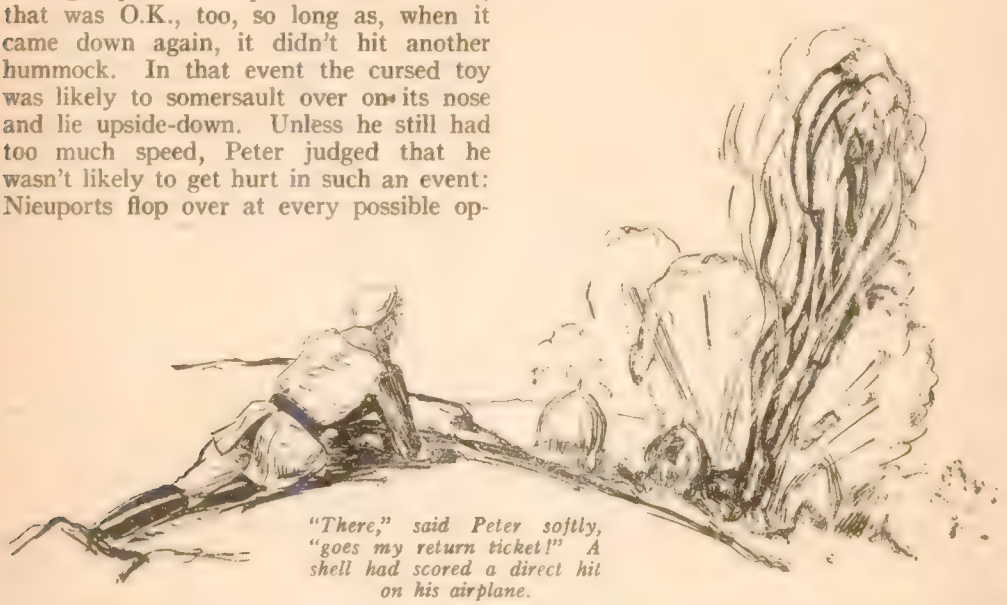
The Meuse was a silver, twisting tape. Thank Pershing, nobody had yet discovered how to camouflage a river! Once they succeeded in doing that, a night flyer might as well travel with his eyes shut. Try to make any compass-point true when it's almost on top of a block of steel!

There was the loop in the river, though. A spot of light or two indicated the sluggish brook which came in from the left. He banked sharply and went westward. Eight kilometers, with a dead motor—he'd figured that diving angle too. Better too high than too low, however. He allowed for all of a two-hundred-foot error in his altimeter.

Cursed thing just happened to be reasonably accurate tonight. He was zipping across the darkish humps which must be the haystacks almost before he knew it. He went over on one wing and swished round dizzily. A damn' tricky job to judge your height by starlight: many a man has tried to set his plane down when he was still twenty feet up in the air. But here

Peter had the rising haystacks to help him somewhat. When their tops came level with his eyes, he would be all right. Still too high, though! No.

He didn't perceptibly feel his wheels touch the earth. But the immediate bounce of the machine told him that he had struck a rough spot. The plane soared. Well, that was O.K., too, so long as, when it came down again, it didn't hit another hummock. In that event the cursed toy was likely to somersault over on its nose and lie upside-down. Unless he still had too much speed, Peter judged that he wasn't likely to get hurt in such an event: Nieuports flop over at every possible opportunity. You simply unbuckle your belt and fall head-first out of them.



"There," said Peter softly, "goes my return ticket!" A shell had scored a direct hit on his airplane.

But, of all things, he didn't want the plane left lying there in open sight. That would start a thorough German investigation, would provoke very lively suspicion. Whereas, with a three-point landing—

Pang! The little plane struck again. It hopped very little, however, was almost stopped.

"Guy that invents four-wheel brakes for these busses will make a fortune," Peter thought out loud. "Ugh!" He was jammed into his belt as the Nieuport tried to climb the low stone wall at the field's boundary, didn't quite succeed, and rolled back again, stationary.

PETER sprang clear—stood there in the starlight and listened. The field was silent as a cemetery. He'd made it!

Peter Marleigh dropped his goggles in the plane's cockpit, then carefully went through all his pockets to make sure that there was not a scrap of identifying material upon his person. Then, panting and pulling, he wrestled his plane up to the nearest haystack. It took two hours' hard work to bury it completely, with the crate of fluttering pigeons on its top wing. But when the job was done, Peter stepped off and surveyed it, satisfied. Unless some one came very close to that stack and noticed how disproportionately big it was, there would be very little fear of the plane's discovery.

Thus, content, Lieutenant Peter Marleigh, U. S. Army, deliberately soiled his face and hands with earth, then slid his hands into the slits of his reefer, sailor-wise, and started calmly to trudge westward.

Just before dawn he crouched down beneath the bank of a sunken road, gathered himself a few chips, and deliberately lit a fire. He had a hunk of corned beef in his pocket, half a loaf of bread, and an old cognac bottle full of water. Matches, too; but that was all his pockets held.

He warmed the beef on a twig, and was just biting into it when a goose-stepping squad came round the bend in the roadway. The corporal challenged threateningly.

"I am Sollen, a ship's steward," Peter answered calmly in impeccable German.

The corporal wanted to know what in the name of several devils a ship's steward was doing here.

"I am looking for Captain the Baron von Braggwitz," Peter assured the man with perfect placidity, as he turned his chunk of meat on the twig which he was using as a spit. He began to chew com-

fortably on the singed corned beef and bread-crust.

He was not in the least disturbed now. He had cause for reasonable assurance. Only the week before, after the prettiest sort of a dog-fight, he had personally shot down the Baron von Braggwitz.

On the Baron's body had been the unexpired lease of a New York apartment, a membership card in a well-known Long Island golf club, even a ticket-stub for the Casino theater. The dead man had been in the United States quite recently, obviously. He would certainly have had a manservant there.

Thus, to the staff officers to whom he was quickly conducted, Peter elaborated his story. He knew nothing of Von Braggwitz's business—a servant wouldn't. But when the United States had declared war and the Baron had been obliged to return to the Fatherland, the faithful servant had resolved to follow. It had taken months and months before he was finally able to sign on as steward on a Norwegian steamer. He had deserted the ship at Trondhjem, Norway; had worked his way down to Malmo, Sweden, thence across to Hamburg. He had nearly reached his gracious master.

THE story was sound. The gentlemen of the headquarters staff took such devotion as natural. Peter, within three days, was a white-jacketed waiter in the staff mess.

"Kellner!" He jumped, clicked heels and saluted whenever he heard the confounded cry. "Waiter, waiter, waiter!" Those crabbed Krauts were forever demanding service.

But on the whole, Waiter Sigmund Sollen—as he was carried on the muster—was well enough treated. He quickly made friends with a bushy-haired, pop-eyed little fellow from Cincinnati, who was thoroughly fed up on war and extremely homesick for the Ohio River and Eden Park.

The great Allied drive of October was beginning. That much Peter was able to gather. Moreover, it was not very long before he learned that the story of the mine under the Aire River was nothing but an elaborate hoax. When they drank too much, of an evening, Peter's masters of the headquarters mess used to guffaw about that.

Happily the mess was only six kilometers away from the hayfield where Peter had hidden his plane. Every other night, perilous as the operation was, Peter sneaked out to the oversize rick with breadcrumbs and water for his imprisoned pigeons. He released two, each wearing on its leg the tiny metal cylinder bearing the message that the legend of the mine was legend only.

Peter might, upon the night when he released the second bird, have gone home safely himself. The moon was up; the immediate neighborhood of the hayfield was deserted and silent. In the south there was the eternal rumble of the guns, of course—grown much closer, Peter judged, within the last fortnight. The horizon flickered and blazed continually, as if seared by perpetual lightning.

Trying to follow the invisible course of the homing bird, young Peter had his first nauseating attack of fear. How he wished that he too might fly back to his own cote!

This task for which he had volunteered was vastly venturesome. The fear of unconscious self-betrayal dogged him day and night: he might run into an officer who had known the late Baron in America, who had known Von Braggwitz intimately enough to remember what his servant looked like. There were, as a matter of fact, officers in the very mess Peter served who had been to school or college in the United States. Peter had almost volunteered information, one late evening, on the matter of an abstruse football rule which had once decided a Princeton-Dartmouth game. The debating young lieutenants—who, likely enough, heartily wished they were back in safe, sport-loving America—had, indeed, asked him.

It had been on the tip of his tongue to tell them. He had seen that very game. But, "Please, gentlemen," he had caught himself, "I do not comprehend American football. Bicycle racing, yes; or bowling—"

They had told him to go to the devil, and gone on with their discussion.

YES, Peter Marleigh told himself, as he stood there in the empty hayfield beneath the moonlight, he had undertaken a desperate mission. And so far as his primary purpose had been, he had fulfilled it. His brother and his fellow-Pennsylvanians were in no danger from subterranean explosion. The whole thing had been an ingenious myth, the supposedly stupid prisoner a "plant."

Well, why not go home then—now, this instant? Go back to the clean, fierce busi-

ness of fighting high up in the open air? Escape this hempen noose which forever lay round his throat? Unconsciously he pulled at the neckband of his shirt.

Not yet, though, he decided manfully. So far, the information he had managed to gather had been entirely negative. At any time some positive, useful news might come his way—news of a well-masked attack, an unexpected barrage, an artful ambush. If Peter might obtain such information, he would be in the way of saving hundreds—perhaps thousands—of American lives. No—damn it all, he'd stick!

HE nearly repented of his decision next morning after breakfast when the sharp, black-browed mess sergeant Hannele said suddenly: "Sollen, you always talk English in your sleep."

"I was born in Hoboken, New Jersey." Peter braced himself. The mess sergeant was a shrewd fellow.

"I talk English to myself—sometimes," the waiter from Cincinnati called Curt put in fortunately.

But Peter guessed that Hannele was watching him astutely, that at any time the fellow might carry his suspicions higher up. If they gave him a real examination— Very well indeed young Peter knew the exactness with which Germany records her vital statistics. They would look up his mother and father, his forebears to the third and fourth generation. And then—he could vision a dark, limp thing, slowly swayed by the wind!

The very same evening, however, the young flyer's hope of picking up some useful news was realized. All day the Allied bombardment had been steadily creeping nearer. The big push was on. On a front of over two hundred kilometers the Americans, French and British were striking simultaneously. The headquarters staff which Peter served had been ordered west to the Hindenburg Line.

"I only wish we could stay and watch what will happen when they attempt to take Catacomb Hill," an aide snickered.

Peter wondered if his ears had visibly extended themselves. Kitchen gossip had told him of this Catacomb Hill, an incredibly strong fortress mined in one of the escarpments of the Argonne Forest. Machine-guns could hold that commanding point indefinitely. The whole Argonne was so strong a post, indeed, that there had been practically no fighting there at all throughout the whole of the war. And now the plan was, Peter gathered, to use this Catacomb Hill as a German Verdun, a fortress that none should pass.

PETER had no map, of course. It would have been fatal to be found with an Allied map on his person. He could not send back by pigeon the exact coördinates of Catacomb Hill. And he dared not attempt to consult a German map; waiters are not supposed to be tacticians. But Peter guessed that he could locate the place accurately enough to carry timely warning to General Liggett's corps.

In the confusion of the mess' packing up and moving out, Peter estimated that he could slip away without much danger of apprehension. Once out at the hayfield, he'd have only to throw off some hay, spin his prop and be off. Golly, how good it would be to sail up through the thin, sweet air again, to feel the wind tug at his head—to be going home!

The headquarters staff, jingling bravely on beautiful mounts, moved out. The trucks with the servants and supplies were to follow.

Peter lay in a roadside ditch till they were all gone. If they missed him,—which wasn't likely,—they'd have no time to search for him at such a moment. Under a sky, fortunately clouded now, Peter worked back toward his hayfield.

Four kilometers covered, he was surprised that the shell-bursts should be so close. Those flashing detonations ahead were from the .155 G. P. F.'s, unquestionably. The Yanks were coming—try to stop 'em!

Nerves tensed by the long strain of his hazardous adventure, Peter could not rid himself of the worrying thought that he might—here at the very climax of his successful mission—be destroyed by the fire of his own friends. Well, he sure would climb high to get above the lofty trajectory of those G. P. F.'s. He must get his message back. Yes, and he'd right well like to get back himself, after all.

IT had been his custom, on his former visits to his pigeons and hidden plane, to stretch himself flat at the crest of the hill which he was now climbing and take a careful reconnaissance of the field beyond. The rumble of a shell overhead, the sudden crescendo of its shriek as it dropped, now sent him prone on general principles. Bad

"Garn, lads! Give it 'im in the guts!" Curt's swaying figure vanished beneath a rush of bodies.

luck that they should apparently be bracketing this area! What the deuce were those fool artillerymen shooting at? Heartily Peter wished they'd stop. Those crashing shells—with their last fiendish shriek just as they exploded—were frankly horrifying. Young Peter was a veteran of the air; but you can say this in favor of aërial combat: you don't hear much of the other fellow's firing. His tracer bullets whip by in whirling sparks, but your own motor and gun drown his racket. He either gets you or not: but at least he doesn't scare a fellow half to death with deafening shell-bursts.

Better than ever Peter understood what the infantry were up against.

Warily, as stones and chunks of trees and pieces of metal as big as stove-lids whizzed over him, young Peter wriggled to the top of the hill from which he could gain view of the hayfield.

He saw the field immediately—all of it. At the far side of the field a torch of red-yellow flame flared to heaven.

"There," said Peter softly, "goes my return ticket!" An American shell had scored a direct hit on his airplane.

THERE was no time, however, to waste lying there lamenting his perhaps fatal misfortune. The American drive was on in earnest. No chance for a solitary wanderer on foot to try to get back home through a barrage that might well be five or six miles deep.

If, even, he were not annihilated by his own artillery, he would be sure to run into some German patrols. And they, in the heat of battle, would be extremely unlikely to listen to his lame reasons for being so far from his proper station. In a night of such hellish chaos men are wont to shoot first and hold inquiries afterward—if ever.

No, his only sane chance lay in retracing his steps; in resuming once more the rôle he had so far successfully played. Peter knew the destination of the headquarters staff. Luckily, after an hour's walking, which carried him well out of the area of fire, he managed to hail a supply camion and convince the dull driver that the gracious gentlemen of the headquarters staff could not possibly exist without the services of their pet *Kellner*.

He found his friend Curt, from Cincinnati, just at dawn. "Hannele has been looking for you," the other warned.

"Well, I am here, am I not?" Peter answered, becoming once more Sigmund Sollen, waiter.

Hannele cursed him and aimed a kick at him. But that did no harm. All through luncheon, and at dinner that night, Peter strained his ears to hear what was going on along the Meuse-Argonne front.

But nothing at all was said of the front they had just left. They were on the Hindenburg Line now, had other troubles. It was not until he was bringing Kümmel and coffee that Peter heard that which electrified him.

"Again the bedamned Americans," remarked a colonel. "Can we never get rid of them?"

"And those men from New York—militia though they are—know battle," agreed one of the American-educated lieutenants.

Well Pete knew what that meant. Opposite the Germans was the 27th Division, O'Ryan's New York National Guard.

The festivities drew out late that night. The newly arrived staff had many visitors, formal and informal. It was long past midnight before Waiter Sollen was released. And then he was too excited to sleep.

He was stark awake then when he observed a shadow move in the dark of the stable where they were bedded down. "Sollen," a voice whispered.

"Ja, Curt."

Crouched beside him, in tremulous whispers, the little man from Cincinnati poured out his plan of desertion. Lots of the New Yorkers he knew, Curt pointed out. He had once worked on Lexington Avenue close to the 69th Regiment Armory. "Vee vill be prisoners getaken," Curt breathed. "Vee den can home go."

"What makes you think I want to go back to America?"

"Everyvun vould go to America who vas dere vunce."

"Boy, you said it!" Peter agreed. This was no trap then. The little Curt was too stupid for such guile. "When do we start?"

"Now."

"You're on." Carrying their shoes, the two crept out of the stable. No one stopped them; the continuous snort and rumble of heavy breathing was unchecked. There had been many half-emptied glasses left about on the table of the headquarters staff that evening, and mess attendants never believe in wasting good liquor.

It was at the quietest hour of the night, two-thirty. The preparation barrage and its counter had not started. There was ample time before faint dawn.

They were a matter of some seven kilometers from the front-line trenches. Both had on their military blouses, and for a while at least there was no danger that they would attract unfavorable attention. If they were stopped, they had planned between them that they would say they were carrying an oral message from General von Steiglitz, the divisional commander.

Eventually they were stopped several times. But now the scarcity of sentries pacing a post, the complete absence of lights, acquainted them with the fact that they were nearing the real front trenches. They proceeded then with the greatest caution, moving on hands and knees, flattening themselves every minute or so at the sudden radiance of a star shell.

At last they came to a place where men were repairing wire: they could hear the squeaky twist of the pliers, low-voiced orders, the occasional rip of cloth and human curse as a man went foul of the barbs.

THE two lay motionless then. They had not much farther to travel. Once under that wire, there would be a dreadful stretch of open ground where sudden lights might at any moment reveal them. There would be craters and pits to burrow into, of course. Failing such concealment—

"Vee vill tell dem vee surrender. Dey vill not shoot ven dey hear me der English speak," Curt assured.

Considering the character of Curt's "English," Pete wondered a bit about that. He did not, however, disillusion his simple companion; but to himself he grinned grimly: "I bet he believes in Santa Claus!"

Presently the guttural voices moved on; the figures of the wire party could be just dimly descried. Peter and his companion wriggled forward.

Peter had no fear that the wire was electrically charged; they would not turn the current on while a working squad was still out. That was one blessing—for wriggling under that frightful tangle of rusty spikes was bad enough, goodness knows. Their blouses and breeches were badly torn by the time they got through. Like worms they crawled onward across No Man's Land, repeatedly stopping to listen.

Suddenly Curt's hand touched Peter's scratched wrist. "Amerigan vire," Curt breathed. No mistaking those X-shaped posts with the vague tangle of wire stretched between.

"Who's there?" snapped the abrupt challenge.

It came not from beyond the wire, but from near at hand and to one side.

"Vriends," answered Curt, before Peter could muzzle him. "Vee surrender." Impetuously he rose to his feet.

"Agh—give it tuh the dirty Boche!" growled a harsh voice. Figures rose from a crater-hole near at hand. A listening patrol—there was light on their naked bayonets.

"Vee surrender—surrender," Curt wailed. Then, in his access of fear: *"Kamerad!"*

The word betrayed him. Had he stuck

war experience he blessed the sizzling star-shell which suddenly lit up the pitted ground and sent the fierce Australians scrambling for cover. . . . .

Hannele, the mess sergeant, promised to beat Peter to death with his bare hands. As a matter of fact, he merely backed the boy up against the wall of the kitchen and slapped him with grinning

Swifter than light, a plane rocketed down. Peter knew that, climbing, he could never elude that fellow.

to English, however faulty, he might have saved his life. As it was—

"Garn, lads! Give it 'im in the guts!"

Curt's swaying figure abruptly vanished beneath a rush of bodies. They swept on right over the shallow ditch where Peter lay, hobnails treading on him.

"There's another one o' 'em!"

"Bash the blighter, Bill!"

"'E's 'oled in, the bleedin' badger. Cahn't find 'im!"

"Hi, this dead un's got a hiron cross hinside 'is singlet."

"Tyke it 'ome to yer doxy."

"An' money." At that the squad milled round, trampling over Peter again, but not noticing him in their eagerness. "Not them ruddy marks, neither. American money, silver arf dollars."

"Arf dollars is good as arf crowns in Adelide!"

Peter was fully aware of the situation he and his unfortunate companion had blundered into. These were not American troops from New York. The Australians had taken over the sector.

As soundlessly as he could, he writhed away, through the mud, back toward the German lines. For the first time in his ferocity. A bread-knife which lay close to Peter's hand would have served him well. But Peter kept his head, even in the pain of his humiliating punishment. He understood too well how fatal would be the result of a formal court-martial. They would look up his history; that would end it.

He pretended only to cringe, therefore—went about his menial duties silently, as Hannele pursued him with growling execrations: "You will go out for a walk in the dark, will you? And get lost, pig-dog!" Or: "And that be-damned Curt, too. I seppose some sentry put a bayonet through his bowels, the dumb-head! Serve him right!"

Poor Curt! Little the sergeant guessed how accurate was his conjecture!

The day dragged intolerably. Peter noticed with misgiving that the thunder of the guns on the line seemed to be no nearer. The Allied push had been held up, then?

He had to get away! He had to! That was the thought which droned interminably through Peter's consciousness. He was careless and inattentive through dinner that night; a stripling under-lieutenant slashed him across the cheek with a riding-crop because he was slow with the Burgundy.

Peter bit his under-lip with his teeth till it bled, and stuck to the cruel job he'd set himself.

Again it was long after midnight before he was free. The obsession to escape tormented his brain so that he thought he could never sleep. But fatigue triumphed at last. He was awakened only by Hannele's rough shaking.

Trembling with weariness and overwrought nerves, Peter donned his white jacket of service and carried the breakfast in to the officers.

Out of the window he noticed that a square-winged Fokker had landed in the neighboring pasture lot. There was a helmeted mechanic standing by it, and a sentry. The motor of the plane was idling. Occasionally the mechanic climbed in and out of the cockpit, as if making adjustments.

For perhaps five minutes Peter did not notice the face of the aviator who had just come in, and was holding the attention of the other officers of the mess with his account of the action in the Argonne.

"They are hard to stop, yes," the flyer was saying. "But tomorrow—or perhaps this evening—when they attempt to capture Catacomb Hill—*pfui!*" He puffed out his cheeks and blew, as one blows out a line of candles.

"But how did they happen to let you go free, Wolfgang, you rogue?" asked General von Steiglitz. "We had thought not to see you till we met again—ha!—in Paris!"

"The Americans," explained the flyer addressed as Wolfgang, "are singularly unperceptive. They accepted me for just what I seemed, a common soldier, weary, and rather glad to be captured. They fed me famously. They accepted the tale of the mine beneath the Aire River as if it had been written in the Bible. Then one inspired genius, a general who owed his rank —as is the American custom—to the fact that he had made a million dollars in stock-jobbing, or some such trade, conceived the brilliant idea of sending me back to spread disaffection among our troops. You should have seen me beg to be allowed to remain! Actually I wept!" He laughed, and drained off his pint seidel at one draught.

"*Kellner!*" he snapped.

Peter reached for the big glass mug and saw the man's face. It was, as he had just guessed, the stolid Saxon prisoner whom he had himself cross-examined.

At the same instant the officer also looked up.

He did not recognize Peter Marleigh instantly. The fact of Peter's being here, a waiter in a German headquarters mess, contradicted the evidence of his eyes momentarily. But as the counterfeit waiter moved to the kitchen with the empty glass mug the officer's eyes followed him.

"Who is that attendant?"

"Just one of the servants, Wolfgang. He—"

"The hell he is!" Clanking, the officer strode to the kitchen.

Peter was not there, though. He had dropped into a deadfall indeed. No need debating that. This other aviator had played the same rôle as Peter now acted. But the other had succeeded, had returned. And his return was like to hang Peter Marleigh.

There was no time for plan, or even for thought. Bareheaded, in the felt shoes and white coat of his calling, Peter fled.

MERE luck, it was, that caused him to notice the idling Fokker a hundred yards away across the pasture lot.

Peter half turned and ran toward the plane. At any moment he expected to be drilled through the back. He was a capable sprinter, however. Helmeted and be-ribboned staff officers were just crowding out of the front door of the mess hall when Peter reached the plane. The lone sentry, from force of habit, presented a bayonet. The mechanic, on the ground now, stared.

"The Captain—he has lost his gold penknife!"

It was the only thing Peter could think of to say, recalled by his own experience as a student pilot when first looping in a plane he had been astounded to observe his own knife slip from his trouser pocket and come sliding up his chest.

A bullet or two zinged by. The perplexed German soldiers prudently shielded themselves behind the plane's fuselage. Strange proceeding, this: to send a servant out on an errand and then pepper him with pistol-balls! Still, a common man can never comprehend the vagaries of gentlemen.

"You find it?" grunted the mechanic.

Peter was crouched in the cockpit. Lucky that those pilots' seats were armored—good idea. *Whang!* Two Luger balls hit and flattened.

But luckier that Peter had played about with Fokkers before. Easily he opened the throttle. The propeller whirred, became a blur, then, at full speed, was invisible.

The plane rolled forward.

A splinter sliced Peter's cheek superficially. Two holes appeared in an upper wing. But the thud of bullets on the fuselage itself, the reports of the pistols, were no longer audible. Beneath him the ground streamed away. The plane pitched and jolted a bit, then was suddenly only vibrant. He had left the earth, was off!

THE strange figure, bare-headed and in fluttering white jacket, wasted no time getting altitude. It was fly now—fly as fast and low and straight as ever he could. The whole pack would be after him in a moment.

At no more than a scant fifty feet, the desperate fugitive roared above hedgerows and ditches. The gray troops beneath gaped up at him, but naturally did not fire. The Maltese cross was his passport.

There were shells in the air now around him. Though he couldn't hear them, he could perceptibly sense the swish and sweep of their passage. Big ones, bursting close below, would rock and toss the Fokker. But Peter adeptly jockeyed the little ship back to even keel immediately.

Yes, they were after him, all right. Perhaps two miles behind, and considerably above him, five Fokkers followed. About a hundred and forty—maybe a bit more—he could make: as good as any of the others, he surmised.

Running streams of flame close to the ground told him of machine-gun fire. That meant he was close to the lines. Here was the really deadly peril—not from the enemy but from his own gunners. The enemy below him in fact had their mouths wide open as if cheering the daredevil dash; they waved their arms at him.

He was over the staggered line of German machine-guns now. The American Brownings would be on him in an instant. . . . . They were on him now! A strut close to his ear splintered to bits as a stream of lead ate through it.

He rolled over sharply, grazing a tangled heap of wire with one wing tip. Time to go up now and get over the deadly horizontal plane of machine-gun fire.

Go up! Swifter than glinting light, a plane rocketed down from the zenith. One of his pursuers had taken the trouble to get altitude so that he might use it in a final headlong plunge. Veteran that Peter was, he knew that, climbing, he could never elude that fellow.

Like a bat down the aisle of a church Peter drove the Fokker between the two trench-lines.

The swooping German declined the danger of ground-skimming—zoomed and went off into gray storm-clouds.

Only then did Peter perceive that the front of his white coat was bloody. Had he been badly hit, then? Funny he didn't feel it! No. A bullet had raked right across the top of his knuckles and the flying blood was spraying him.

His fingers worked all right, however. A mere scratch. He swung straight for the American trenches, hopping his plane up and down, as if riding waves, so as to throw off the elevation of the American gun-pointers.

He wasn't thirty feet up when he crossed the Allies' trenches. Then some inspired doughboy looped a grenade at him.

It tore off nearly the whole of one wing. Peter, knocked dizzy, had just sense enough to switch off his ignition. He catapulted forward into darkness, a darkness full of dazzling lights and flashes. Then oblivion.

EVEN after he came to, badly bruised, but all in one piece, it took an hour for him to make the Southerners of the 30th Division believe his wild story. They sent him back to division headquarters after a while.

The end of it was that, before the day was over, orders went forward to the 28th Division to give Catacomb Hill plenty of elbow-room. The Pennsylvanians prudently detoured and enveloped the place. The beleaguered stronghold gave up before the week was ended. . . . .

Pete Marleigh did not meet his brother until they were both moving placidly forward with the Army of Occupation, both having volunteered for the job.

Brotherlike, they sat and gossiped in Captain—now Major—Marleigh's comfortable quarters till midnight.

"And you get your two bars, kid, and your D. S. C. too—you lucky little tramp," grinned the proud elder. "Pass the beer."

They were luxuriously drinking Culmbacher, a brew thick and sweet. Peter courteously got up, filled his brother's seidel, and placed it on the table in front of him.

"Kellner!" grinned Major Marleigh delightedly. "By gosh, you've got the habit!"

"Just for *that*—" said Pete—and emptied the seidel of suds on his brother's head.

A FIGHTING MAN

Amazing adventures on another inhabited planet are here vividly imagined and graphically set forth by the inimitable author of the Tarzan stories.

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

BEFORE Jason Gridley departed on the expedition to Pellucidar, he had constructed a simple automatic device for broadcasting signals into space by means of that advanced form of radio communication known as the Gridley Wave—and for recording whatever might be received during his absence. So it happened that one day, entering my friend Gridley's deserted laboratory after a long absence, I saw with astonishment upon the ticker tape the dots and dashes which recorded a message in his code.

In brief, the message explained that for months mysterious signals had been received at Helium (Mars), and while they were unable to interpret them, they felt that they came from the planet Earth.

Repeated attempts to transmit answering signals to Earth proved fruitless; then the best minds of Helium began the task of analyzing and reproducing the Gridley Wave.

They felt that at last they had succeeded, and they were eagerly awaiting an acknowledgment.

I have since been in almost constant communication with Mars, but out of loyalty to Jason Gridley, to whom all the credit and honor are due, I have made no official announcement; nor shall I give out any important information, leaving all that for his return to the outer world; but I believe that I am betraying no confidence if I narrate to you the interesting story of Hadron of Hastor, which he told to me one evening not long since.

It seems best to let Hadron of Hastor,—the young Martian nobleman who is the hero of this story,—give it in his own words. But first let me tell you a little about Mars and about the difficult predicament Hadron got himself into. The dominant race in whose hands rest the progress and civilization—yes, the very life—of Mars differ but little in physical appearance from ourselves. The fact that their skins are a light reddish copper color and that they are oviparous constitute the two most marked divergences from Anglo-Saxon standards. No, there is another—their longevity. A thousand years is the natural span of life of a Martian, although because of their warlike activities and the prevalence of assassination among them, few live their allotted span.

Scattered over all the arid waste lands of the dead sea bottoms, often inhabiting the ruined cities of another age, are the feared green hordes of Mars. The terrible green warriors of Barsoom are the hereditary enemies of all the other races of this martial planet.

The military forces of the red men are highly organized, the principal arm of the service being the air navy, an enormous air force of battleships, cruisers and an infinite variety of lesser craft down to one-man scout flyers.

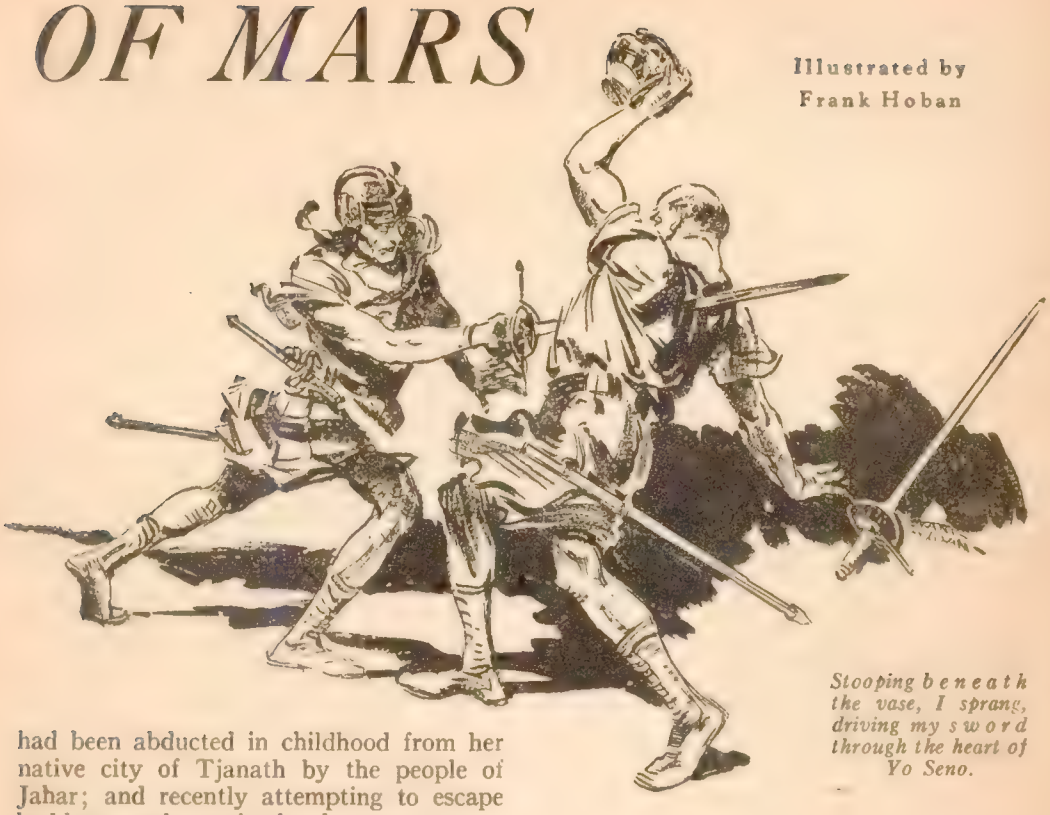
It was, indeed, aboard one of these one-man flyers that Hadron embarked on his great adventure. For Hadron had fallen in love with Sanoma Tora, lovely daughter of a Martian dignitary, and when she was abducted by the crew of a mysterious foreign airship, Hadron impetuously leaped aboard the first craft handy and set out in pursuit.

He failed to come up with the abductors, however, and passing over a city of the green men, he was fired upon and his ship so damaged that later he had to land. After hiding for some time in a ruined tower, Hadron was attacked by a gigantic white ape. He won that combat, however. And shortly thereafter he was enabled to rescue Tavia, a girl of his own race, who

Copyright, 1930, by Edgar Rice Burroughs. All rights reserved.

OF MARS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban



Stooping beneath the vase, I sprang, driving my sword through the heart of Yo Seno.

had been abducted in childhood from her native city of Tjanath by the people of Jahar; and recently attempting to escape had been made captive by the green men.

Mounted on one of their gigantic thoats, with Tavia clinging behind him, Hadron galloped out into the weird Martian night.

Guided by Tavia, they presently reached the grove where Tavia had concealed her flyer shortly before her capture; and embarking therein, they set out through the air for Tavia's native city, Tjanath. This place they reached in safety; but they were ill received, for Tavia's flyer was of a pattern which identified it as coming from the enemy city of Jahar. The people of Tjanath refused to believe either Tavia's story or Hadron's, and Hadron was cast into a dungeon. There he won the friendship of Nur An, a fellow-prisoner from Jahar, and together they contrived to kill their guards and make their way to the upper rooms of the great palace. There they found Nur An's sweetheart Phao and later Tavia: but the alarm had been sounded, and presently Hadron, with Nur An, Phao and Tavia, was recaptured. This time the two men were given short shrift—were hurled to their death into a natural dark abyss from which terrible wailings arose, and from which no one had ever returned alive.

A tremendous cave, the abyss proved to be, with a river running through it. Landing unhurt, Hadron and Nur An armed themselves from the weapons of less fortunate predecessors, and after a battle with a gigantic cave lizard, at length made their way out. Perils even more dire at once beset them, however—first from enormous spiders that stretched their incredible webs about the trees near the cave mouth; then from the treacherous hospitality of the diabolic Ghron, who welcomed them to his walled city, then imprisoned them in a high tower, with dreadful torture in prospect. But from that captivity they likewise escaped—by contriving a hot-air balloon from the spider-web-cloth hangings of their prison, climbing to the roof, inflating their balloon over the chimney—and by its aid floating high away over the savage city of Ghasta. *(Hadron himself here continues the narrative:)*

PRESENTLY a wind caught us, and you may be assured that we gave thanks to our ancestors as we realized that we were

at last drifting from above the cruel city of Ghasta. The wind increased until it was blowing rapidly in a northeasterly direction, but little did we care where it wafted us as long as it took us away from the river Syl and the valley of Hohr.

After we had passed beyond the crater of the ancient volcano, which formed the bed of the valley in which lay somber Ghasta, we saw below us in the moonlight a rough volcanic country that presented a weird and impressive appearance of unreality; deep chasms and tumbled piles of basalt seemed to present an insurmountable barrier to man, which may explain why in this remote and desolate corner of Barsoom the valley of Hohr had lain for countless ages undiscovered.

The wind increased. Floating at a great altitude, we were being carried at considerable speed, yet I could see that we were gradually falling as the hot air within our bag cooled. How much longer it would keep us up I could not guess, but I hoped that it would bear us at least beyond the uninviting terrain beneath us.

With the coming of dawn we were floating but a few hundred feet above the ground; the volcanic country was far behind us and as far as we could see stretched lovely, rolling hills, sparsely timbered with the drought-resisting skeel upon which it has been said the civilization of Barsoom has been erected.

AS we topped a low hill, passing over it by a scant fifty sofads, we saw below us a building of gleaming white. Like all the cities and isolated buildings of Barsoom it was surrounded by a lofty wall, but in other respects it differed materially from the usual Barsoomian type of architecture. The edifice, which was made up of a number of buildings, was not surmounted by the usual towers, domes and minarets that mark all Barsoomian cities and which only in recent ages have been giving away slowly to the flat landing-stages of an aërial world. The structure below us was composed of a number of flat-roofed buildings of various heights, none of which, however, appeared to rise over four levels. Between the buildings and the outer walls and in several open courts between the buildings, there was a profusion of trees and shrubbery with scarlet sward and well-kept paths. It was, in fact, a striking and beautiful sight, yet having so recently been lured to near destruction by the beauties of Hohr and the engaging allurements of her beautiful women, we had no mind to be deceived again by external appearances. We would float on over the palace of enchantment and take our chances in the open country beyond.

But fate willed otherwise. The wind had abated; we were dropping rapidly; beneath us we saw people in the garden of the building and simultaneously, as they discovered us, it was evident that they were filled with consternation. They hastened quickly to the nearest entrances and there was not a human being in sight when we finally came to rest upon the roof of one of the taller sections of the structure.

As we extricated ourselves from the loops in which we had been sitting, the great bag, relieved of our weight, rose quickly into the air for a short distance, turned completely over and dropped to the ground just beyond the outer wall. It had served us well and now it seemed like a living thing that had given up its life for our salvation.

WE were to have little time, however, for sentimental regrets, for almost immediately a head appeared through a small opening in the roof upon which we stood. The head was followed by the body of a man, whose harness was so scant as to leave him almost nude. He was an old man with a finely shaped head, covered with scant gray locks.

Apparent physical old age is so rare upon Barsoom as always to attract immediate attention. In the natural span of life we live often to a thousand years, but during that long period our appearance usually changes but little. It is true that most of us meet violent death long before we reach old age, but there are some who pass the allotted span of life and others who do not care for themselves so well—and these few constitute the physically old among us; evidently of such was this little old man.

At sight of him Nur An voiced an exclamation of pleased surprise. "Phor Tak!" he cried.

"Heigh-oo!" cackled the old man in a high falsetto. "Who cometh from the high heavens who knows old Phor Tak?"

"It is I—Nur An!" exclaimed my friend.

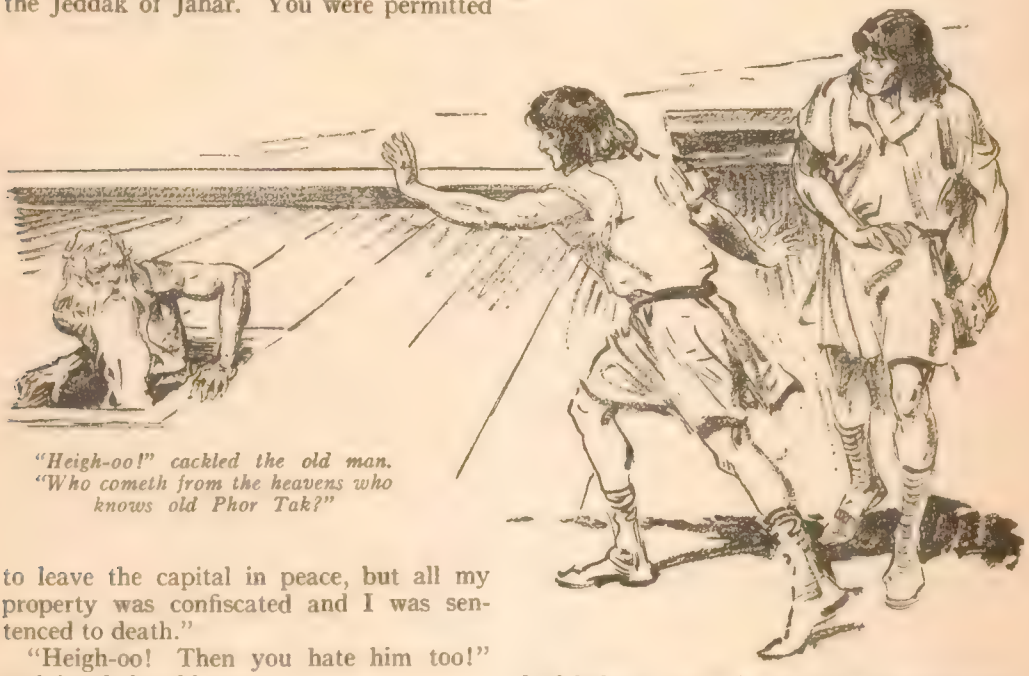
"Heigh-oo!" cried Phor Tak. "Nur An—one of Tul Axtar's pets."

"As you once were, Phor Tak."

"But not now—no, not now," almost screamed the old man. "The foul tyrant squeezed me like some juicy fruit and then cast the empty rind aside. Heigh-oo! He

thought it was empty, but I pray daily to all my ancestors that he may live to know that he was wrong. I can say this with safety to you, Nur An, for I have you in my power; and I promise you that you shall never live to carry word of my whereabouts to Tul Axtar."

"Do not fear, Phor Tak," said Nur An. "I too have suffered from the villainy of the Jeddak of Jahar. You were permitted to leave the capital in peace, but all my property was confiscated and I was sentenced to death."



"Heigh-oo!" cackled the old man. "Who cometh from the heavens who knows old Phor Tak?"

"Heigh-oo! Then you hate him too!" exclaimed the old man.

"Hate is a weak word to describe my feeling for Tul Axtar," replied my friend.

"It is well," said Phor Tak. "When I saw you descending from the skies I thought that my ancestors had sent you to help me, and now I know that it was indeed true. Be this another warrior from Jahar?" he added, nodding his old head toward me.

"No, Phor Tak," replied Nur An. "This is Hadron of Hastor, a noble of Helium, but he, too, has been wronged by Jahar."

"Good!" exclaimed the old man. "Now there are three of us. Heretofore I have only had slaves and women to assist me, but now with two trained warriors, young and strong, the goal of my triumph appears almost in sight."

As the two men conversed I had recalled that part of the story that Nur An had told me in the pits of Tjanath which related to Phor Tak and his invention of the rifle that projected the disintegrating rays which had proved so deadly against the patrol boat above Helium the night of Sanoma Tora's abduction. Strange, indeed, was fate that it should have brought me into the palace of the man who held the secret that might mean so much to Helium and to all Barsoom. Strange, too, and devious had been the path along which fate had led me, yet I knew that my ancestors were guiding me and that all must have been arranged to some good end.

When Phor Tak had heard only a portion of our story he insisted that we must be both fatigued and hungry and, like the good host that he proved to be, he conducted us down to the interior of his palace and, summoning slaves, ordered that we be bathed and fed and then permitted to retire until we were rested. We thanked him for his kindness and consideration, of which we were glad to avail ourselves.

THE days that followed were both interesting and profitable. Phor Tak, surrounded only by a few faithful slaves that had followed him into his exile, was delighted with our company and with the assistance which we could give him in his experiment, which, once assured of our loyalty, he explained to us in detail.

He told us the story of his wanderings after he had left Jahar and of how he had stumbled upon this long-deserted castle,

whose builder and occupants had left no record other than their bones. He told us that when he discovered it skeletons had strewn the courtyard and in the main entrance were piled the bones of a score of warriors, attesting the fierce defense that the occupants had waged against some unknown enemy, while in many of the upper rooms he had found other skeletons—the skeletons of women and children.

"I believe," he said, "that the place was beset by members of some savage horde of green warriors that left not a single survivor. The courts and gardens were overgrown with weeds and the interior of the building was filled with dust, but otherwise little damage had been done. I call it Jhama, and here I am carrying on my life's work."

"And that?" I asked.

"Revenge upon Tul Axtar," said the old man. "I gave him the disintegrating ray; I gave him the insulating paint that protects his own ships and weapons from it; and now some day I shall give him something else—something that will be as revolutionary in the art of war as the disintegrating ray itself, something that will cast the fleet of Jahar broken wrecks upon the ground, something that will search out the palace of Tul Axtar and bury the tyrant beneath its ruins."

WE had not been long at Jhama before both Nur An and I became convinced that Phor Tak's mind was at least slightly deranged from long brooding over the wrongs inflicted upon him by Tul Axtar; though naturally possessed of a kindly disposition he was obsessed by a maniacal desire to wreak vengeance upon the tyrant with utter disregard as to the consequences to him and to others. Upon this single subject he was beyond the influence of reason and having established to his own satisfaction that Nur An and I were potential factors in the successful accomplishment of his design, he would fly into a perfect frenzy of rage whenever I broached the subject of our departure.

Fretting as I was beneath the urge to push on to Jahar and the rescue of Sanoma Tora, I could but ill brook this enforced delay, but Phor Tak was adamant—he would not permit me to depart, and the absolute loyalty of his slaves made it possible for him to enforce his will. In our hearing he explained to them that we were guests, honored guests as long as we made no effort to depart without his permission, but should they discover us in an attempt to leave Jhama surreptitiously they were to destroy us.

NUR AN and I discussed the matter at length. We had discovered that four thousand haads of difficult and unfriendly country lay between us and Jahar. Being without a ship and without thoats there was little likelihood that we should be able to reach Jahar in time to be of service to Sanoma Tora, if we ever reached it at all, and so we agreed to bide our time, impressing Phor Tak with our willingness to aid him in the hope that eventually we should be able to enlist his aid and support. So successful were we in this that within a short time we had so impressed the old scientist that we began to entertain hopes that he would take us into his innermost confidence and reveal the nature of the instrument of destruction which he was preparing for Tul Axtar.

I must admit that I was principally interested in his invention because I was confident that in order to utilize it against Tul Axtar he must find some means of transporting it to Jahar and in this I saw an opportunity for reaching the capital of the tyrant myself. . . . .

We had been in Jhama about ten days, during which time Phor Tak had exhibited signs of extreme nervousness and irritability. He kept us with him practically all of the time that he was not closeted in the innermost recesses of his secret laboratory.

During the evening meal upon the tenth day Phor Tak seemed more distraught than ever. Talking interminably as usual about his hatred of Tul Axtar, his countenance assumed an expression of maniacal fury.

"But I am helpless," he almost screamed at last. "I am helpless because there is no one to whom I may entrust my secret, who also has the courage and intelligence to carry out my plan. I am too old, too weak to undergo the hardships that would mean nothing to young men like you, but which must be undergone if I am to fulfill my destiny as the savior of Jahar. If I could but trust you! If I could but trust you!"

"Perhaps you can, Phor Tak," I suggested.

The words or my tone seemed to soothe him. "Heigh-oo!" he exclaimed. "Sometimes I almost think that I can."

"We have a common aim," I said, "—or

at least different aims which converge at the same point—Jahar. Let us work together then. We wish to reach Jahar. If you can help us, we will help you."

He sat in silent thought for a long moment. "I'll do it," he said. "Heigh-oo! I'll do it. Come!" And rising from his chair, he led us toward the locked door that had hitherto barred the entrance to his secret laboratory.

CHAPTER XII

The Flying Death

PHOR TAK'S laboratory occupied an entire wing of the building and consisted of a single immense room fully fifty feet in height. His benches, tables, instruments and cabinets, located in one corner, were lost in the great interior. Near the ceiling and encircling the room was a single track from which was suspended a miniature cruiser, painted the ghastly blue of Jahar. Upon one of the benches was a cylindrical object about as long as one's hand. These were the only noticeable features of the laboratory other than its immense emptiness.

As Phor Tak ushered us within he closed the door behind him and I heard the ominous click of the ponderous lock. There was something depressing in the suggestiveness of the situation—induced, perhaps, by our knowledge that Phor Tak was mad and accentuated by the eerie mystery of the vast chamber.

Leading us to the bench upon which lay the cylindrical object which had attracted my attention, he lifted it carefully, almost caressingly, from its resting place. "This," he said, "is a model of the device that will destroy Jahar. In it you behold the concentrated essence of scientific achievement. In appearance it is but a small metal cylinder, but within it is a mechanism as delicate and as sensitive as the human brain and you will perceive that it functions almost as though animated by a mind within itself; but it is purely mechanical and may be produced in quantities quickly and at low cost. Before I explain it further I shall demonstrate one remarkable phase of its possibilities. Watch!"

STILL holding the cylinder in his hand, Phor Tak stepped to a shallow cabinet against the wall and opening it revealed an elaborate equipment of switches, levers and push-buttons. "Now watch the miniature flyer suspended from the track near the ceiling," he directed, at the same time closing a switch. Immediately the flyer commenced to travel along the track at considerable speed. Now Phor Tak pressed a button upon the top of the cylinder, which immediately sped from his extended palm, turned quickly in the air and rushed straight for the speeding flyer. Slowly the distance between the two closed; the cylinder, curving gradually into the line of flight of the flyer, was now trailing directly behind it, its pointed nose but a few feet from the stern of the miniature ship. Then Phor Tak pulled a tiny lever upon his switchboard and the flyer leaped forward at accelerated speed. Instantly the speed of the cylinder increased and I could see that it was gaining in velocity much more rapidly than the flyer. Halfway around the room again its nose struck the stern of the fleeing craft with sufficient severity to cause the ship to tremble from stem to stern; then the cylinder fell away and floated gently toward the floor. Phor Tak opened a switch that stopped the flyer in its flight and then, running forward, caught the descending cylinder in his hand.

"THIS model," he explained, as he returned to where we stood, "is so constructed that when it makes contact with the flyer it will float gently downward to the floor, but as you have doubtless fully realized ere this, the finished product in practical use will explode upon contact with the ship. Note these tiny buttons with which it is covered. When any one of these comes in contact with an object the model stops and descends, whereas the full-sized device, properly equipped, will explode, absolutely demolishing whatever it may have come in contact with. As you are aware, every substance in the universe has its own fixed vibratory rate. This mechanism can be so attuned as to be attracted by the vibratory rate of any certain substance. The model, for example, is attracted by the blue protective paint with which the flyer is covered. Imagine a fleet of Jaharian warships moving majestically through the air in battle formation. From an enemy ship or from the ground and at a distance so far as to be unobservable by the ships of Jahar, I release as many of these devices as there are ships in the fleet, allowing a few moments to elapse between launchings. The first torpedo rushes toward the fleet and de-

stroys the nearest ship. All the torpedoes in the rear, strung out in line, are attracted by the combined masses of all the blue protective coverings of the entire fleet. The first ship is falling to the ground and though all of its paint may not have been destroyed, it has not the power to deflect any of the succeeding torpedoes, which one by one destroy the nearest of the remaining ships until the fleet has been absolutely erased. I shall have destroyed a great fleet without risking the life of a single man of my own following!"

"But they will see the torpedoes coming," suggested Nur An, "and they will devise some defense. Even gunfire might stop many of them."

"Heigh-oo! But I have thought of that," cackled Phor Tak. He laid the torpedo upon a bench and opened another cabinet.

In this cabinet were a number of receptacles; some were tightly sealed and others open revealing their contents, which appeared to be different-colored paints. From a number of these receptacles protruded the handles of paint-brushes. One such handle, however, appeared to hang in midair, a few inches above one of the shelves, while just beneath it was a section of the rim of a receptacle that also appeared to be resting upon nothing. Phor Tak placed his open hand directly beneath this floating rim and when he removed his hand from the cabinet, the rim of the receptacle and the portion of the handle of the paint brush, floating just above it, followed, hovering just over his extended fingers, which were cupped in the position that they might assume were they holding a glass jar, such as would ordinarily have belonged to a rim such as that which I could see floating about an inch above his fingers.

GOING to the bench where he had laid the cylinder, Phor Tak made motions as of setting a jar upon it, and though there was no jar visible other than the floating rim I distinctly heard a noise that was identical with the sound which the bottom of a glass jar would have made in coming in contact with the bench.

I can assure you that I was greatly mystified, but still more so by the events immediately following. Phor Tak seized the handle of the paint-brush and made a pass a few inches above the metal torpedo. Instantly a portion of the torpedo, about an inch wide and three or four inches long, disappeared. Pass after pass he made, until finally the whole surface of the torpedo had disappeared—where it had rested the bench was empty. Phor Tak returned the handle of the paint-brush to its floating position just above the floating jar rim and then he turned to us with an expression of childlike pride upon his face, as much as to say, "Well, what do you think of that? Am I not wonderful?" And I was certainly forced to concede that it was wonderful and that I was entirely baffled and mystified by what I had seen.

"There, Nur An," exclaimed Phor Tak, "is the answer to your criticism of the Flying Death."

"I do not understand," said Nur An with a puzzled expression upon his face.

"Heigh-oo!" cried Phor Tak. "Have you not seen me render the device invisible?"

"But it is gone," said Nur An.

PHOR TAK laughed his high cackling laugh. "It is still there," he said, "but you cannot see it. Here," and he took Nur An's hand and guided it toward the spot where the device had been.

I could see Nur An's fingers apparently feeling over the surface of something several inches above the top of the table. "By my first ancestor, it is still there!" he asserted.

"It is wonderful," I exclaimed. "You did not even touch it; you merely made passes above it with the handle of a paint-brush and it disappeared."

"But I did touch it," insisted Phor Tak. "The brush was there, but you did not see it because it was covered by the substance which renders the Flying Death invisible. Notice this transparent glass receptacle in which I keep the compound of invisibility and all that you can see of it is that part of the rim which, by chance, has not been coated with the compound."

"Marvelous!" I exclaimed. "Even now, although I have witnessed it with my own eyes I can scarce conceive of the possibility of such a miracle."

"It is no miracle," said Phor Tak. "It is merely the application of scientific principles well known to me for hundreds of years. Nothing moves in straight lines; light, vision, electro-magnetic forces follow lines that curve. The compound of invisibility merely bows outward the reflected light, which, entering our eyes and impinging upon our optic nerves, results in the

Pass after pass he made, until the whole surface of the torpedo had disappeared.

phenomenon which we call vision, so that they pass around any object which is coated with the compound. When I first started to apply the compound to the Flying Death, your line of vision was deflected around the small portions so coated, but when I coated the entire surface of the torpedo, the curve of your vision passed completely around it on both sides so that you could plainly see the bench upon which it was resting, precisely as though the device had not been there."

I WAS astounded at the apparent simplicity of the explanation and, naturally, being a soldier, I saw the tremendous advantage that the possession of these two scientific secrets would impart to the nation which controlled them. For the safety, yes, for the very existence of Helium, I must possess them and if that were impossible, then Phor Tak must be destroyed before the secret of this infernal power could be passed on to any other nation. Perhaps I could so ingratiate myself with old Phor Tak as to be able to persuade him to turn these secrets over to Helium in return for Helium's assistance in the work of wreaking his vengeance upon Tul Axtar.

"Phor Tak," I said, "you hold here within your grasp two secrets which in the hands of a kindly and beneficent power would bring eternal peace to Barsoom."

"Heigh-oo!" he cried. "I do not want peace—I want war. War! War!"

"Very well," I agreed, realizing that my suggestion had not been in line with the mad processes of his crazed brain. "Let us have war then—and what country upon Barsoom is better equipped to wage war than Helium? If you want war, form an alliance with Helium."

"I do not need Helium," he cried. "I do not need to form alliances. I shall make war—I shall make war alone. With the invisible Flying Death I can destroy whole navies, whole cities, entire nations. I shall start with Jahar. Tul Axtar shall be the first to feel the weight of my devastating powers. When the fleet of Jahar has tumbled upon the roofs of Jahar and the walls of Jahar have fallen about the ears of Tul Axtar, then shall I destroy Tjanath. Helium shall know me next. Proud and mighty Helium shall tremble and bow at the feet of Tul Axtar. I shall be Jeddak of Jeddaks, ruler of a world!"

As he spoke, his voice rose to a piercing shriek and he trembled in the grip of the frenzy that held him.

HE must be destroyed, not alone for the sake of Helium, but for the sake of all Barsoom; this mad mind must be removed if I found that it was impossible to direct or cajole it to my own ends. I determined, however, to omit no sacrifice that might tend to bring about a satisfactory conclusion to this strange adventure. I knew that mad minds were sometimes fickle minds and I hoped that in a moment of insane caprice Phor Tak might reveal to me the secret of the Flying Death and the compound of invisibility. This hope was his temporary reprieve from

death; its fulfillment would be his pardon, but I knew that I must work warily—that at the slightest suggestion of duplicity, Phor Tak's suspicions would be aroused and that I should then be the one to be destroyed.

I tossed long upon my sleeping silks and furs that night in troubled thought and planning. I felt that I must possess these secrets; yet how? That they existed within his brain alone, I knew, for he had told me that there were no written formulas or plans or specifications for either of them. Somehow I must wheedle them out of him and the best way to start was to ingratiate myself with him. To this end I must further his plans in so far as I possibly could.

Just before I fell asleep my thoughts reverted to Sanoma Tora and to the urgent mission that had led me to enter upon what had developed into the strangest adventure of my career. I felt a twinge of self-reproach as I suddenly realized that Sanoma Tora had not been uppermost in my mind while I had lain there making plans for the future, but now with recollection of her a plan was suggested whereby I might not only succor her but also advance myself in the good graces of Phor Tak at the same time. And thus relieved, I fell asleep.

IT was late the following morning before I had an opportunity to speak with the old inventor when I immediately broached the subject that was uppermost in my mind. "Phor Tak," I said, "you are handicapped by lack of knowledge of conditions existing in Jahar and the size and location of the fleet. Nur An and I will go to Jahar for you and obtain the information that you must have if your plans are to be successful. In this way, Nur An and I will also be striking a blow at Tul Axtar while we will be in a position to attend to those matters which require our presence in Jahar."

"But how will you get to Jahar?" demanded Phor Tak.

"Could not you let us take a flyer?" I asked.

"I have none," replied Phor Tak. "I know nothing about them. I am not interested in them. I could not even build one."

To say that I was both surprised and shocked would be putting it mildly, but if I had previously entertained any doubts that Phor Tak's brain was abnormally developed, it would have vanished with his admission that he knew nothing about flyers, for it seemed to me that there was scarcely a man, woman or child in any of the flying nations of Barsoom but could have constructed some sort of flyer.

"But how without flyers did you expect to transport the Flying Death to the vicinity of the Jaharian fleet? How did you expect to demolish the palace of Tul Axtar, or reduce the city of Jahar to ruins?"

"Now that you and Nur An are here to help me, I can set my slaves to work under you and easily turn out a dozen torpedoes a day. As these are completed they will immediately be launched and eventually they will find their way to Jahar and the fleet. Of that there is no doubt—even if it takes a year they will eventually find their prey."

"If nothing chances to get in their way," I suggested; "but even so, what pleasure will you derive from your revenge if you are unable to witness any part of it?"

"Heigh-oo! I have thought of that," replied Phor Tak, "but one may not have everything."

"You may have that," I told him.

"And how?" he demanded.

"By taking your torpedoes aboard a ship and flying to Jahar," I replied.

"No," he exclaimed stubbornly, "I shall do it my own way. What right have you to interfere with my plans?"

"I merely want to help you," I said, attempting to mollify him by a conciliatory tone and attitude.

"AND there is another thought," said Nur An, "that suggests that it might be expedient to follow Hadron's plans."

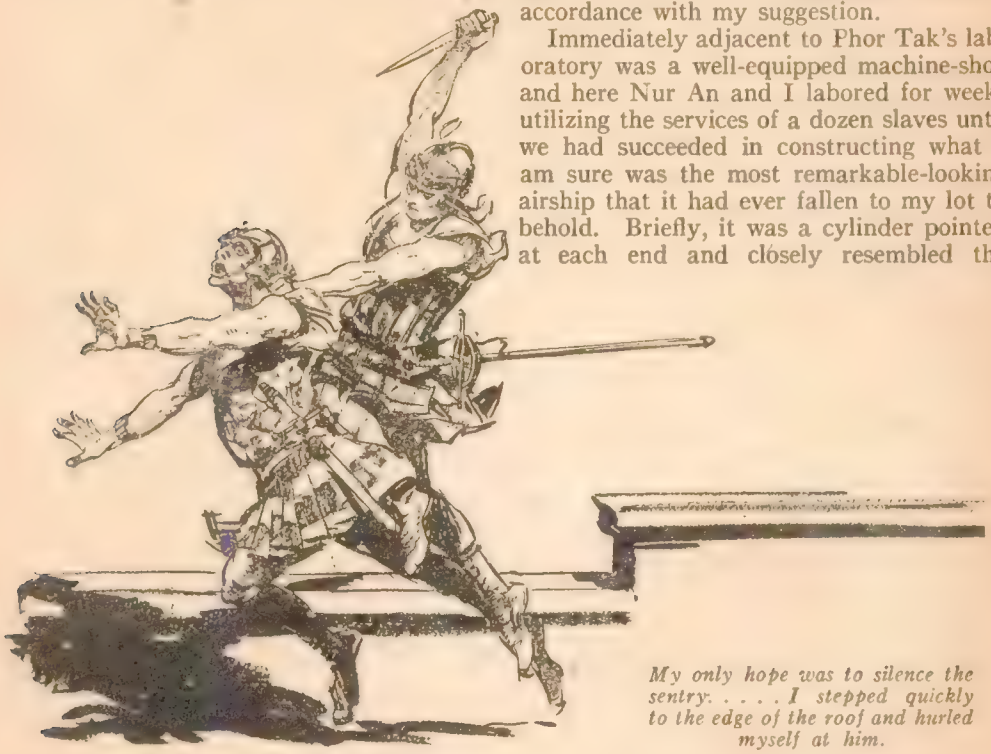
"You are both against me," said Phor Tak.

"By no means," Nur An assured him. "It is our keen desire to aid you that prompts the suggestion."

"Well, what is yours then?" asked the old man.

"Your plan contemplates the destruction of the navies of Tjanath and Helium following the fall of Jahar," exclaimed Nur An. "This, at least in respect to the navy of Helium, you cannot possibly hope to accomplish at so great a distance and without any knowledge of the number of ships to be destroyed, nor will your torpedoes be similarly attracted to them as they are to the ships of Jahar because the ships of these other nations are not protected by the blue paint of Jahar. It will, therefore, be necessary for you to proceed to the vicinity of

Tjanath and later to Helium and for your own protection you will use the blue paint of Jahar upon your ship, for you may never be certain unless you are on the ground at



My only hope was to silence the sentry. . . . . I stepped quickly to the edge of the roof and hurled myself at him.

the time that you have destroyed all of the navy of Jahar, or all of their disintegrating-ray rifles."

"That is true," said Phor Tak thoughtfully.

"And furthermore," continued Nur An, "if you dispatch more than the necessary number of torpedoes, those that remain at large will certainly be attracted by the blue paint of your own ship and you will be destroyed by your own devices."

"You ruin all my plans," screamed Phor Tak. "Why did you think of this?"

"If I had not thought of it you would have been destroyed," Nur An reminded him.

"Well, what am I to do about it? I have no ship. I cannot build a ship."

"We can get you one," I said.

"How?" the old man demanded.

THE conversation between Nur An and Phor Tak had suggested a plan to me and this I now explained roughly to them. Nur An was enthusiastic over the idea, but Phor Tak was not particularly keen for it. I could not understand the grounds for his objection, nor, as a matter of fact, did they interest me greatly, since he finally admitted that he would be compelled to act in accordance with my suggestion.

Immediately adjacent to Phor Tak's laboratory was a well-equipped machine-shop and here Nur An and I labored for weeks utilizing the services of a dozen slaves until we had succeeded in constructing what I am sure was the most remarkable-looking airship that it had ever fallen to my lot to behold. Briefly, it was a cylinder pointed at each end and closely resembled the model of the Flying Death. Within the outer shell was another smaller cylinder; between the walls of these two we placed the buoyancy tanks. The tanks and the sides of the two envelopes were pierced by observation ports along each side of the ship and at the bow and stern. These ports could be completely covered by shutters hinged upon the outside, but operated from within. There were two hatchways in the keel and two above which led to a narrow walkway along the top of the cylinder. In turrets forward and aft were mounted two disintegrating-ray rifles. Above the controls was a periscope that transmitted an image of all that came within its range to a ground-glass plate in front of the pilot.

The entire outside of the ship was first painted the ghastly blue that would protect it from the disintegrating-ray rifles of Jahar, while over this was spread a coating of the compound of invisibility. The shutters that covered the ports being similarly coated, the ship could attain practically total invisibility by closing them, the

only point remaining visible being the tiny eye of the periscope.

NOT possessing sufficient technical knowledge to enable me to build one of the new type motors, I had to content myself with one of the old types of much less efficiency.

At last the work was done. We had a ship that would accommodate four with ease and it was uncanny to realize this fact and yet, at the same time, be unable to see anything but the tiny eye of the periscope when the covers were lowered over the ports, and even the eye of the periscope was invisible unless it was turned in the direction of the observer.

As the work neared completion I had noticed that Phor Tak's manner became more marked by nervousness and irritability. He found fault with everything and on several occasions he had almost stopped the work upon the ship.

Now, at last, we were ready to sail. The ship was stocked with ammunition, water and provisions, and at the last minute I installed a destination-control compass for which I was afterward to be devoutly thankful.

When I suggested immediate departure, however, Phor Tak demurred, but would give me no reason for his objection. Presently, however, I lost patience and told the old man that we were going anyway whether he liked it or not.

HE did not fly into a rage as I had expected, but laughed instead, and there was something in the laugh that seemed more terrible than anger.

"You think I am a fool," he said, "and that I will let you go and carry my secrets to Tul Axtar, but you are mistaken."

"So are you," I snapped. "You are mistaken in thinking that we would betray you and you are also mistaken in thinking that you can prevent our departure."

"Heigh-oo!" he cackled. "I do not need to prevent your departure, but I can prevent your arrival at Jahar or elsewhere. I have not been idle while you worked upon this ship. I have constructed a full size Flying Death. It is attuned to search out this ship. If you depart against my wishes, it will follow and destroy you. Heigh-oo! What do you think of that?"

"I think that you are an old fool," I cried in exasperation. "You have the opportunity to enlist the loyal aid of two honorable warriors, and yet you choose to turn them into enemies."

"Enemies who cannot harm me," he reminded me. "I hold your lives in the hollow of my hand. Well have you concealed your thoughts from me, but not quite well enough. I have read enough of them to know that you think me mad and I have also received the impression that you would stop at nothing to prevent me from using my power against Helium. I have no doubt but that you will help me against Jahar, and against Tjanath, too, perhaps, but Helium, the mightiest and proudest empire of Barsoom, is my real goal. Helium shall proclaim me Jeddak of Jeddaks if I have to wreck a world to accomplish my design."

"Then all our work has been for nothing?" I demanded. "We are not going to use the ship we have constructed?"

"You may use it," he said, "but under my terms."

"And what are they?" I asked.

"You may go alone to Jahar, but I shall keep Nur An here as hostage. If you betray me, he dies."

There was no moving him; no amount of argument could alter his determination. I tried to convince him that one man could accomplish little, that, in fact, he might not be able to accomplish anything; but he was adamant—I should go alone or not at all.

CHAPTER XIII

"Let the Fire Be Hot!"

AS I arose that night into the starlit splendor of a Barsoomian night, the white castle of Phor Tak lay a lovely gem below me bathed in the soft light of Thuria. I was alone; Nur An remained behind the hostage of the mad scientist. Because of him I must return to Jhama. Nur An had exacted no promise from me, but he knew that I would return.

Twenty-five hundred haads to the east lay Jahar and Sanoma Tora. Fifteen hundred haads to the southwest was Tjanath and Tavia. I turned the nose of my flyer toward the goal of duty, toward the woman I loved, and with throttle wide my invisible craft sped toward distant Jahar.

But my thoughts I could not control. Despite my every effort to keep them concentrated upon the purpose of my adventure, they persisted in wandering to a prison tower, to a tousled head of refrac-

tory hair, to a rounded shoulder that had once pressed mine. I shook myself to be rid of the vision as I sped through the night, but it constantly returned and in its wake came harrowing thoughts of the sinister fate that might have overtaken Tavia during my absence.

I SET my destination-control compass upon Jahar, the exact position of which I had obtained from Phor Tak, and thus relieved of the necessity of constantly remaining at the controls, I busied myself about the interior of the ship. I looked to the ammunition of the disintegrating-ray rifles and rearranged it to suit my own ideas.

Phor Tak had equipped me with three types of rays, one of which would disintegrate metal; another would disintegrate wood; the third would disintegrate human flesh. I had also brought along something which Phor Tak had refused me when I asked him for it. I pressed the pocket pouch in which I had placed it to make sure that I still had the vial, the contents of which I imagined might prove of inestimable value.

I raised all the port shutters and adjusted the ventilators, for at best the interior of this strange ship seemed close and stuffy to one who was accustomed to the open deck of the fast scout-flyers of Helium. Then I spread my sleeping silks and furs and settled myself down to rest, knowing that when I arrived at Jahar my destination-control compass would stop the ship and an alarm would awaken me if I still slept. But sleep would not come. I thought of Sanoma Tora; I visualized her cold and stately beauty—but always her haughty eyes dissolved into the eyes of Tavia, sparkling with the joy of life, soft with the light of friendship.

I was far from Jhama when at last I sprang determinedly from my sleeping silks and furs and, going to the controls, I cut off the destination-control compass and with a single, swift turn swung the nose of the flyer toward Tjanath.

THE die was cast. I felt that I should experience remorse and self-loathing, but I experienced neither. I joyed in the thought that I was rushing to the service of a friend and I knew in the most innermost recesses of my heart that of the two Tavia had more claim upon my friendship than had Sanoma Tora, from whom I had received at best only scant courtesy.

I did not again try to sleep. I did not feel like sleeping; instead I remained at the controls and watched the desolate landscape as it rushed forward to pass beneath me. With the coming of dawn I saw Tjanath directly ahead of me and as I approached the city it was difficult for me to realize that I could do so with utter impunity and that my ship with its closed ports was entirely invisible. Moving slowly now, I circled above the palace of Haj Osis. Those portions of the palace that were topped by flat roofs revealed sleepy guardsmen. At the main hangar a single guardsman watched.

I floated above the east tower; beneath me, cuddled in her sleeping silks and furs, I could picture Tavia. How surprised she would be could she know that I hovered thus close above her!

DROPPING lower I circled the tower, coming to a stop finally opposite the windows of the room in which Tavia had been confined. I maneuvered the ship to bring one of the ports opposite the window and close enough to give me a view of the interior of the room. But though I remained there for some time, I could see no one and at last I became convinced that Tavia had been removed to other quarters. I was disappointed for this must necessarily greatly complicate my plans for rescue. I had foreseen but little difficulty in transferring Tavia by night through the tower window to the flyer; now I must make my plans all anew.

Everything hinged, of course, upon my ability to locate Tavia. To do that it was evident that I must enter the palace. The moment that I quitted the invisibility of my flyer, I should be menaced by the greatest danger at every turn and, clothed as I was in homemade harness fashioned by the hands of the slaves of Phor Tak, I should arouse the active suspicion of the first person who laid eyes upon me.

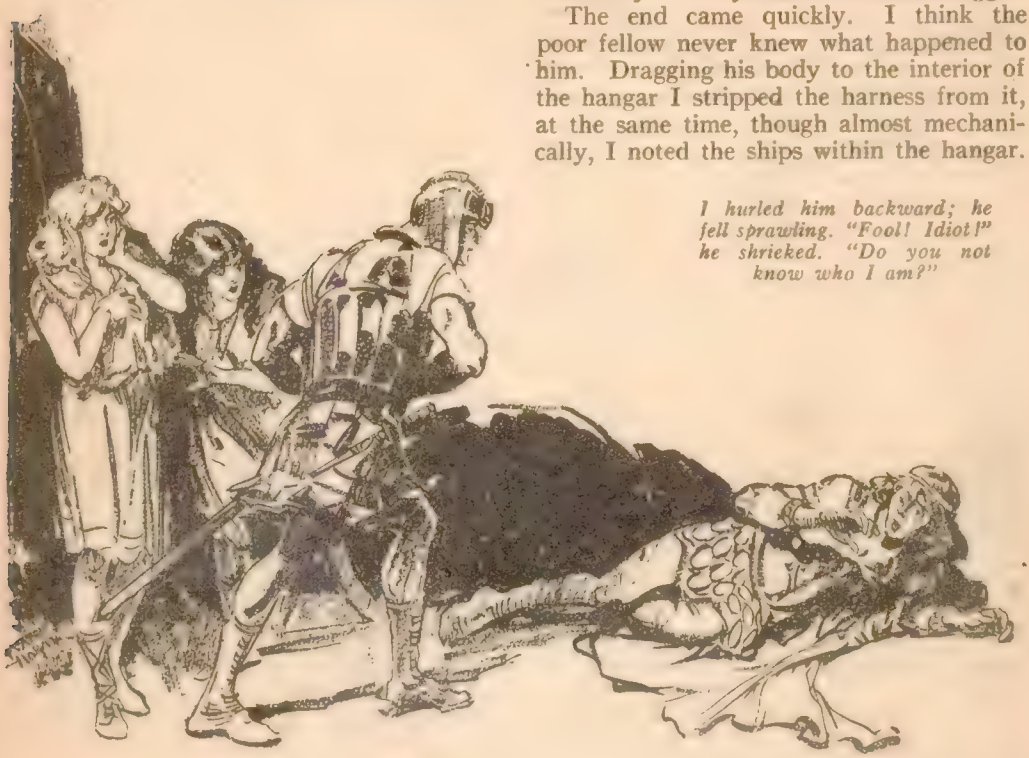
I must enter the palace and to do it in any degree of safety I must have a disguise.

All my ports were now closed, the periscope being my only eye. I turned it slowly about as I tried to plan some method of procedure that might have within it some tiny seed of success.

As the panorama slowly unfolded itself upon the ground glass before me there appeared the main palace hangar and the single warrior upon watch. Here my peri-

scope came to rest, for here was an entrance to the palace and here a disguise.

Slowly maneuvering my ship in the direction of the hangar, I brought it down upon the roof of that structure. I should have been glad to moor it, but here there were



I hurled him backward; he fell sprawling. "Fool! Idiot!" he shrieked. "Do you not know who I am?"

no means at hand. I must depend upon its own weight and hope that no high wind would rise.

Realizing that at the instant I emerged from the interior of the flyer I should be entirely visible, I waited, watching through my periscope until the warrior upon the roof just below me turned his back; then I emerged quickly from the ship through one of the upper hatches and dropped to the roof upon the side closest to the warrior. I was about four feet from the edge of the roof and he was standing almost below me, his back toward me. Should he turn, he would discover me instantly and could give an alarm before I could be upon him. My only hope of success, therefore, was to silence him before he realized that he was menaced.

FROM the experiences of John Carter I have learned that first thoughts are often inspirations, while sober afterthought may lead to failure, or so delay action as to nullify all its effect.

Therefore, in this instance, I acted upon inspiration. I did not hesitate. I stepped quickly to the edge of the roof and hurled myself straight at the broad shoulders of the sentry. In my hand was a slim dagger.

The end came quickly. I think the poor fellow never knew what happened to him. Dragging his body to the interior of the hangar I stripped the harness from it, at the same time, though almost mechanically, I noted the ships within the hangar. With the exception of one, a patrol boat, they all bore the personal insignia of the Jed of Tjanath. They were the king's ships—an ornate cruiser heavily armed, two smaller pleasure crafts, a two-man scout flyer and a one-man scout flyer. They were not much, of course, by comparison with the ships of Helium, but I was quite sure that they were absolutely the best that Tjanath could afford. However, having my own ship, I was not particularly concerned with these, other than that I am always interested in ships of all descriptions.

Not far from where I stood was the entrance to a ramp leading down into the palace. Realizing that only through boldness might I succeed, I walked directly to the ramp and entered it. As I rounded the first turn I was appalled to see that the ramp passed directly through a guardroom and upon the floor fully a score of warriors were stretched upon their sleeping silks and furs.

I did not dare to pause; I must keep on. Perhaps I could pass them without arousing their curiosity. I had had but a brief glimpse of the room before I entered it and in that glimpse I had seen only men apparently wrapped in sleep and an instant later, as I emerged into the room itself, I saw that it contained only those whom I had first seen. No one within it was awake, but I heard voices in an adjoining room. Hurrying quickly across the apartment I entered the ramp upon the opposite side.

I think my heart had stood still as I strode silently across that room among those sleeping men, for had a single one of them awakened he would inevitably have known that I was no fellow member of the palace guard.

FARTHER down within the palace itself I should be in less danger, for so great is the number of retainers in the palace of a jed that no one may know them all by sight, so that strange and unfamiliar faces are almost as customary as they are upon the avenues of a city.

My plan was to try to reach the tower room in which Tavia had been confined, for I was positive that, from my position in the flyer, I could not see the entire interior and it was just possible that Tavia was there.

Owing to the construction of my ship I had been unable to attract her attention without raising a hatch and taking the chance of revealing my presence, which would have, I felt, jeopardized Tavia's chances for escape far too greatly to warrant my doing so.

Perhaps I should have waited until night; perhaps I was over-anxious and in my zeal might be running far greater risks than were necessary. I thought of these things now and perhaps I upbraided myself, but I had gone too far now to retreat. I was properly in for it, whatever might follow.

As I followed the ramp down to different levels, I tried to discover some familiar landmark that might lead me to the east tower and as I emerged into a corridor at one of the levels I saw almost directly in front of me a door which I instantly recognized—it was the door to the office of Yo Seno, the keeper of the keys.

"Good!" I thought. "Fate certainly has led me here."

Crossing to the door I opened it and stepped quickly within the room, closing the door behind me. Yo Seno was sitting at his desk. He was alone. He did not look up. He was one of those arrogant men—a small man with a little authority—who liked to impress his importance upon all inferiors. Therefore, presumably, it was his way to ignore his visitors for a moment or two. This time he made a mistake. After quietly locking the door behind me I crossed to the door at the opposite end of the room and bolted it too.

IT was then that, doubtless compelled by curiosity, Yo Seno looked up. At first he did not recognize me. "What do you want?" he demanded gruffly.

"You, Yo Seno," I said.

He looked at me steadily for a moment with growing astonishment, then with his eyes wide he leaped to his feet. "You?" he screamed. "By Issus, no! You are dead!"

"I have returned from the grave, Yo Seno. I have come back to haunt you," I said.

"What do you want?" he demanded. "Stand aside! You are under arrest."

"Where is Tavia?" I asked.

"How do I know?" he demanded.

"You are the keeper of the keys, Yo Seno. Who should know better than you where the prisoners are?"

"Well, what if I do know? I shall not tell," he said.

"You shall tell, Yo Seno, or you shall die," I warned him.

He had walked from behind his desk and was standing not far from me when, without warning and with far greater celerity than I gave him credit for possessing, he snatched his long sword from its scabbard and was upon me.

I WAS forced to jump backward quickly to avoid his first cut, but when he swung the second time my own sword was out and I was on my guard. Yo Seno proved himself no mean antagonist. He was clever with the sword and he knew that he was fighting for his life. I wondered at first why he did not call for help, and then I came to the conclusion that it was because there were no warriors in the adjoining room as there had been upon my previous visit to Yo Seno's quarters. We fought in silence, only the din of metal upon metal reflecting the deadliness of the combat.

I was in a hurry to be done with him and was pressing him closely when he resorted to a trick which came near to proving my undoing. I had backed him up

against his desk and thought that I had him where he could not escape. I could not see his left hand behind him, nor the heavy vase for which it was groping, but an instant later I saw the thing flying straight at my head and I also saw the opening which Yo Seno made in the instant that he cast the missile—for so occupied was he with his aim that he let his point drop. Stooping beneath the vase I sprang into close quarters, driving my sword through the heart of Yo Seno.

As I wiped the blood from my blade upon the hair of my victim I could not repress a feeling of elation that it had been my hand that had cut down the seducer of Phao and in some measure avenged the honor of my friend, Nur An.

NOW, however, was no time for meditation. I heard footsteps approaching in the corridor without and hastily seizing the harness of the corpse, I dragged it toward the panel which hid the entrance to the secret corridor that led to the room in the east tower—that familiar corridor where I had passed those happy moments alone with Tavia.

With more haste than reverence, I dumped the corpse of Yo Seno into the dark interior and then, closing the panel after me, I groped my way through the darkness toward the tower room, my heart high with the hope that I might find Tavia still there.

As I approached the panel at the tower end of the corridor I could feel my heart beating rapidly—a sensation to which I was unaccustomed and which I could not explain. I was positive that I was in excellent physical condition and, while it is not at all unusual that surprise or imminent danger causes the heart of some men to palpitate, even though they may be endowed with exceptional courage, yet, for my part, I had never experienced such a sensation and I must admit that I was deeply mystified.

The anticipation of seeing Tavia again soon caused me to forget the unpleasant sensation and as I stopped behind the panel my whole mind was occupied with pleasurable consideration of what I hoped awaited me beyond—a longed-for reunion with this best of friends.

I was upon the point of springing the catch and opening the panel when my attention was attracted by voices from the room beyond. I heard a man's voice and that of a woman, but I could understand no words. Cautiously, I opened the panel sufficiently to permit me to view the interior of the apartment.

THE scene that met my gaze sent the hot fighting blood surging all through my frame. In the center of the room a young warrior in rich trappings had Tavia in his grasp and was dragging her across the room toward the corridor doorway.

Tavia struggled, striking at him.

"Don't be a fool," snarled the man. "Haj Osis has given you to me. You will lead a better life as my slave than most free women live."

"I prefer prison or death," replied Tavia.

Phao was standing helplessly at one side, her eyes filled with compassion for Tavia. It was obvious that she could do nothing to defend her friend, for the trappings of the warrior proclaimed him of high rank, but just what that rank was I did not discern at the time, for I was not interested.

In a bound I was in the center of the room and seizing the warrior roughly by the shoulder, I hurled him backward so heavily that he fell sprawling to the floor. I heard gasps of astonishment from both Phao and Tavia and my name breathed in the soft accents of the latter.

As I drew my sword the warrior scrambled to his feet, but did not draw. "Fool! Idiot! Knave!" he shrieked. "Do you not realize what you have done? Do you not know who I am?"

"In a moment it will be 'who you *were*,'" I told him in a low voice. "On guard!"

"No," he cried, backing away. "You wear the harness and the metal of a warrior of the guard. You cannot dare draw your sword against the son of Haj Osis. Back, fellow—I am Prince Haj Alt."

"I could pray to Issus that you might be Haj Osis himself," I replied; "but at least there will be some recompense in the knowledge that I have destroyed his spawn. On guard, you fool, unless you wish to die like a sorak!"

HE was still backing away and now he looked about him with every evidence of terror written upon his weak countenance. He espied the panel door that I had inadvertently left open and before I could prevent he had darted through and closed it behind him. I leaped in pursuit, but the lock had clicked and I did not know where to find the mechanism to release it.

"Quick, Phao!" I cried. "You know the

secret of the panel. Open it for me. We must not permit this fellow to escape or he will sound the alarm and we shall all be lost."

Phao ran quickly to my side and placed her thumb upon a button cleverly hidden in the ornate carving of the wood paneling that covered the wall. I waited in breathless expectancy, but the panel did not open. Phao pushed frantically again and again, and then she turned to me with a gesture of helplessness and defeat.

"He has tampered with the lock upon the other side," she said. "He is a clever rogue and he would have thought of that."

"We must follow," I said, and raising my long sword I struck the panel a heavy blow that would have shattered much thicker planking, but I only made a scratch upon it, tearing away a little piece scarce thicker than a fingernail. The scar that I had made revealed the harrowing truth—the panel was constructed of forandus, the hardest and the lightest metal known to Barsoomians. I turned away. "It is useless," I said, "to attempt to pierce forandus with cold steel."

TAVIA had crossed to us and was standing in silence, looking up into my face. Her eyes were bathed with unshed tears and I saw her lips tremble. "Hadron!" she breathed. "You have come back from the dead. Oh, why did you come? For this time they will make no mistake."

"You know why I came, Tavia," I told her.

"Tell me," she said, very soft and low.

"For friendship, Tavia," I replied; "for the best friend that a man ever had."

At first she seemed surprised and then an odd little smile curved her lips. "I would rather have the friendship of Hadron of Hastor," she said, "than any other gift the world might give me."

It was a nice thing for her to say, and I certainly appreciated it, but I did not understand that little smile. However, I had no time then in which to solve riddles; the problem of our safety was the all-important question, and then it was that I thought of the vial in my pocket pouch.

I looked quickly about the room. In one corner I espied a pile of sleeping silks and furs; something there might answer my purpose; the contents of the vial might yet give us all freedom if I had but time enough. I ran quickly across the room and searched rapidly until I had found three pieces of fabric that were at least better suited to my purpose than any of the others. I opened my pocket pouch to withdraw the vial and at the same instant I heard the pounding of running feet and the clank and clatter of arms.

Too late! They were already at the door. I closed my pocket pouch and waited. At first it was in my mind to take them on in combat as they entered, but I put that idea aside as worse than useless, since it could result in nothing but my death, whereas time might conjure an opportunity to use the contents of the vial.

AS the door swung open, fully fifty warriors were revealed in the corridor without. A padwar of the guard entered followed by his men.

"Surrender!" he commanded.

"I have not drawn," I replied. "Come and take it."

"You admit that you are the warrior who attacked the prince, Haj Alt?" he demanded.

"I do," I replied.

"What have these women to do with it?"

"Nothing. I do not know them. I followed Haj Alt here because I thought that it would give me the opportunity that I have long sought to kill him."

"Why did you want to kill him?" demanded the padwar. "What grievance have you against the prince?"

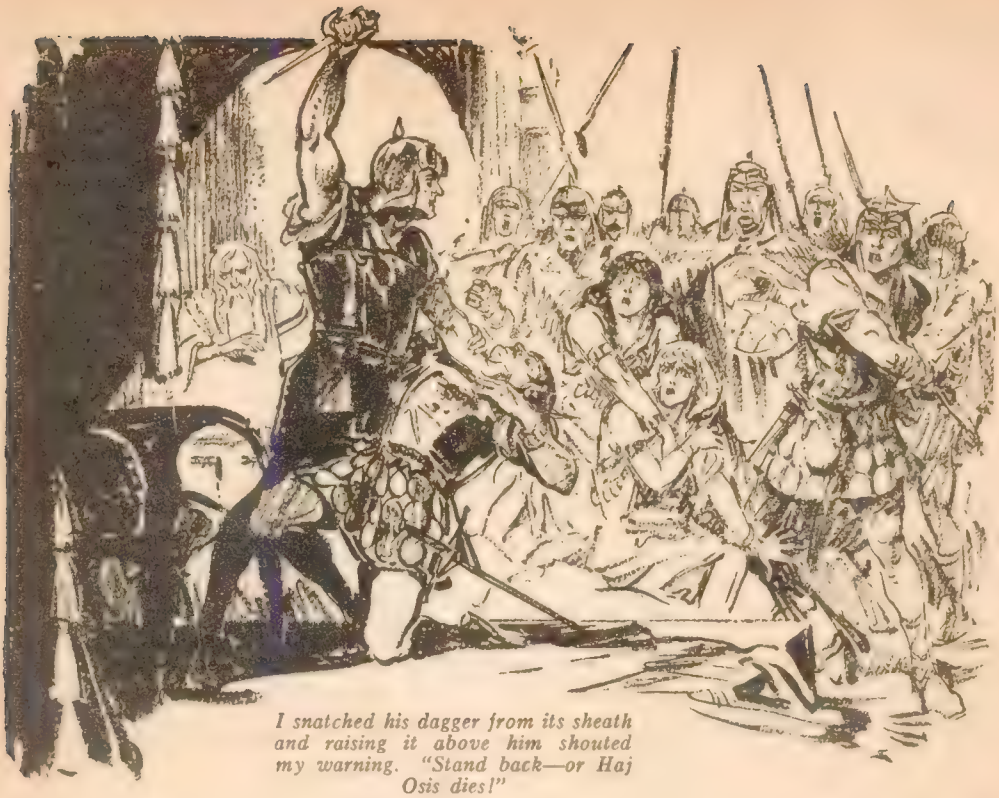
"None," I replied. "I am a professional assassin and I was hired by others."

"Who are they?" he demanded.

I laughed at him, for I knew that he knew better than to ask a professional assassin of Barsoom such a question as that. The members of this ancient fraternity are guided by a code of ethics which they scrupulously observe and seldom, if ever, can anything persuade or force one of their number to divulge the name of his principal.

I saw Tavia's eyes upon me and it seemed to me that there was a questioning expression in them, but I felt that she must know I was lying thus to protect her and Phao.

I WAS hustled from the chamber and as I was being conducted along the corridors and down the ramps of the palace, the padwar questioned me in an endeavor to learn my true identity. I was greatly relieved to discover that they did not recognize me and I hoped that I might continue to escape recognition; not that it would make any difference in my fate for I realized that the



I snatched his dagger from its sheath and raising it above him shouted my warning. "Stand back—or Haj Osis dies!"

direst would be inflicted upon one who had attempted to assassinate the prince of the house of Haj Osis, but I was afraid that were I to be recognized they might accuse Tavia of complicity in the attack upon Haj Alt and that she would be made to suffer accordingly.

Presently I found myself in the pits again and by chance in the very cell that Nur An and I had occupied. I experienced almost the sensations of a homecoming, but with variations. Once again I was alone, fettered to a stone wall, my only hope the vial which they had overlooked and which still reposed at the bottom of my pocket pouch. But this was no time or place to use its contents, nor had I the requisite materials at hand even had I been unfettered.

I was not long in the pits this time before warriors came and, unlocking my fetters, conducted me to the huge throne-room of the palace, where Haj Osis sat upon his dais surrounded by the high officers and functionaries of his army and his court.

HAJ ALT the Prince was there and when he saw me being led up toward the throne he trembled with rage. As I was halted in front of the Jed, he turned to his son. "Is this the warrior who attacked you, Haj Alt?" he asked.

"This is the scoundrel," replied the younger man. "He took me by surprise and would have stabbed me in the back had I not managed to outwit him."

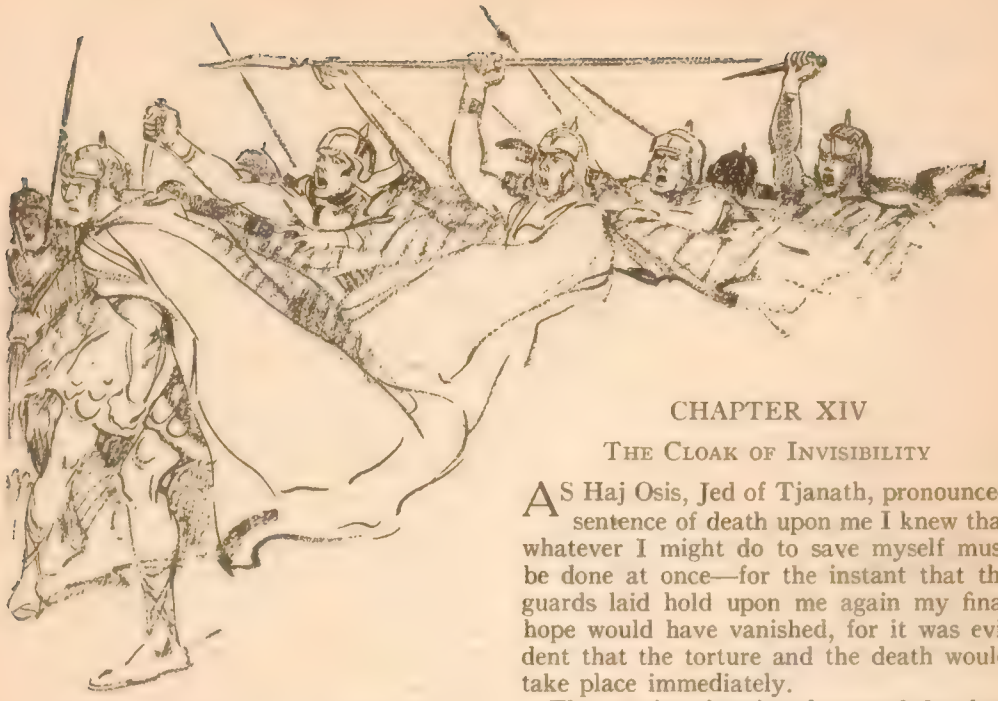
"He drew his sword against you," demanded Haj Osis, "—against the person of a prince?"

"He did—and he would have killed me with it, too, as he did kill Yo Seno, whose corpse I found in the corridor that leads from Yo Seno's office to the tower."

So they had found the body of Yo Seno. Well, they would not kill me any deader for that crime than for menacing the life of the prince!

AT this juncture an officer entered the throne-room rather hurriedly. He was breathing rapidly as he stopped at the foot of the throne. He was standing right beside me and I saw him turn and look quickly at me, his eyes running rapidly up and down me between head and feet. Then he addressed the man upon the throne.

"Haj Osis, Jed of Tjanath," he said. "I came quickly to tell you that the body of a warrior of the hangar guard was just found within the Jed's hangar. His harness had been stripped from him and his weapons, while strange harness and strange weapons were left beside his corpse and as



I approached your throne, Haj Osis, I recognized the harness of my dead warrior upon the body of this man here," —and he pointed an accusing finger at me.

Haj Osis was scrutinizing me very carefully now. There was a strange look in his eyes that I did not like. It betokened half recognition and then of a sudden I saw the dawning of full recognition there, and the Jed of Tjanath swore a loud oath that resounded through the great throne-room.

"Breath of Issus!" he shouted. "Look at him! Do you not know him? He is the spy from Jahar who called himself Hadron of Hastor. He died the Death—with my own eyes I saw him—and yet he is back here in my palace murdering my people and threatening my son; but this time he shall die." Haj Osis had arisen from his throne and with upraised hands that seemed to claw the air above me he appeared like some hideous corphal pronouncing a curse upon its victim. "But first we shall know who sent him here. He did not come of his own volition to kill me and my son; behind him is some malignant mind that yearns to destroy the Jed of Tjanath and his family. Burn him slowly, but do not let him die until he has divulged the name. Away with him! Let the fire be hot, but slow."

CHAPTER XIV

The Cloak of Invisibility

AS Haj Osis, Jed of Tjanath, pronounced sentence of death upon me I knew that whatever I might do to save myself must be done at once—for the instant that the guards laid hold upon me again my final hope would have vanished, for it was evident that the torture and the death would take place immediately.

The warriors forming the guard that had escorted me from the pits were lined up several paces behind me. The dais upon which Haj Osis stood was raised but a little over three feet above the floor of the throne room. Between me and the Jed of Tjanath there was no one, for as he had sentenced me he had advanced from his throne to the very edge of the platform.

The action that I took was not delayed as long as it has taken me to tell it. Had it been, it could never have been taken, for the guards would have been upon me. Instantly as the last word fell from his mouth my plan was formulated and in that instant I leaped cat-like to the dais, full upon Haj Osis, Jed of Tjanath. So sudden, so unexpected was my attack that there was no defense. I seized him by the throat with one hand and with the other I snatched his dagger from its sheath and raising it above him I shouted my warning in a voice that all might hear.

"Stand back, or Haj Osis dies!" I cried.

THEY had started to rush me, but as the full import of my threat came home to them, they halted.

"It is my life, or yours, Haj Osis," I said, "unless you do what I tell you to do."

"What?" he asked, his face black with terror.

"Is there an anteroom behind the throne?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. "What of it?"

"Take me there alone," I said. "Command your people to stand aside."

"And let you kill me when you get me there?" he demanded, trembling.

"I shall kill you now if you do not," I replied. "Listen, Haj Osis—I did not come here to kill you or your son. What I told the padwar of the guard was a lie. I came for another purpose, far transcending in importance to me the life of Haj Osis or that of his son. Do as I tell you and I promise that I shall not kill you. Tell your people that we are going into the anteroom and that I promise not to harm you if we are left alone there for five xats." *

He hesitated. "Make haste," I said. "I have no time to waste," and I let the point of his own dagger touch his throat.

"Don't!" he screamed, shrinking back. "I will do whatever you say. Stand back, all of you," he shouted to his people. "I am going to the anteroom with this warrior and I command you upon pain of death not to enter there for five xats. At the end of that time, come; but not before."

I took a firm hold upon Haj Osis' harness between his shoulders and I kept the point of his dagger pressed against the flesh beneath his left shoulder-blade as I followed him toward the anteroom, while those who had crowded the dais behind the throne fell back to make an aisle for us. At the doorway I halted and turned toward them.

"Remember," I said, "five full xats and not a tal before."

ENTERING the anteroom, I closed and bolted the door and then, still forcing Haj Osis ahead of me, I crossed the room and closed and bolted the only other door to the chamber. Then I pushed the Jed to one side of the room.

"Lie down here upon your face," I said.

"You promised not to kill me," he wailed.

"I shall not kill you unless they come before the five xats are up and you do otherwise than I bid you so as not to delay me. I am going to bind you, but it will not hurt you."

With poor grace he laid down upon his belly and with his own harness I strapped his arms together behind his back. Then I blindfolded him and left him lying there.

As I had first entered the room I had taken in its contents with a single, quick glance and I had seen there precisely the things that I most needed, and now that I had disposed of Haj Osis I crossed quickly to one of the windows and tore down a part of the silk hangings that covered it. It was a full length of fine, light silk and very wide, since it had been intended to hang in graceful folds as an underdrape with heavier hangings. At the ornate desk where the Jed of Tjanath signed his decrees, I went to work.

First I took the vial from my pocket pouch and unstoppered it; then I wadded the silk into a ball and because of its wonderful fineness I could compress it within my two hands. Fastening the ball of silk into a loosely compressed mass with strips torn from another hanging, I slowly poured the contents of the vial over it, turning the ball with the point of Haj Osis' dagger. Remembering Phor Tak's warning, I was careful not to let any of the contents of the vial come in contact with my flesh and I could readily see why one had to be careful as I watched the ball of silk disappear before my eyes.

KNOWING that the compound of invisibility would dry almost as rapidly as it impregnated the silk, I waited only a brief instant after emptying about half the contents of the vial upon the ball. Then, groping with my fingers, I found the strings that held it into its roughly spherical shape and cut them, after which I shook the silk out as best I could. For the most part it was invisible, but there were one or two spots that the compound had not reached. These I quickly daubed with some of the liquid remaining in the vial, which I now restoppered and replaced in my pocket pouch.

So much depended upon the success of my experiment that I almost feared to put it to the test, but it must be tested and there could be only a few xats remaining before the warriors of Haj Osis would burst into the antechamber.

By feel alone I draped the silk over my head so that it fell all about me. Through its thin and delicate meshes I could see objects at close range quite well enough to make my way about. I crossed to Haj Osis and took the blind from his eyes, at the same time stepping quickly back.

He looked affrightedly about him.

"Who did that?" he demanded—and then half to himself, "He is gone." For a moment he was silent, rolling his eyes about in

* About fifteen minutes.

I kept the point of his dagger pressed beneath his left shoulder-blade as I followed him toward the anteroom.

all directions, searching every nook and corner of the apartment. Then an expression that was part hope and part relief came to his eyes.

"Quick!" he shouted in a loud voice. "The guard! He has escaped!"

I breathed a sigh of relief—if Haj Osis could not see me, no one could; my plan had succeeded.

I DARED not return to the throne-room and make my escape that way along corridors with which I was familiar, for I could already hear the rush of feet toward the anteroom door and I was well aware that, although they could not see me, they could feel me and that unquestionably in the rush my mantle of invisibility, or at least a portion of it, would be torn from me, which would indubitably spell my doom.

I ran quickly to the other doorway and unbolted it and as I opened it I looked back at Haj Osis. His eyes were upon the doorway and they were wide with incredulity and horror. For an instant I did not realize the cause and looked quickly behind me to see if I could see what had caused Haj Osis' fright and then it dawned upon me and I smiled. He had seen and heard the bolt shot and the door open as though by ghostly hands.

He must have sensed a vague suspicion of the truth, for he turned quickly toward the other door and screamed a warning in a high falsetto voice. "Do not enter," he cried, "until the five xats are up. It is I who commands—Haj Osis, the Jed."

Closing the door after me and still smiling, I hastened along the corridor, searching for a ramp that would carry me to the upper levels of the palace from which I could easily locate the guardroom and the hangar where I had left my ship.

The corridor I had entered led directly into the royal apartments.

AT first it was difficult to accustom myself to my invisibility and as I suddenly entered an apartment in which there were several people, my first impulse was to turn and flee, but since I had stepped directly into the view of one of the occupants of the room and at a distance of little more than five or six feet without attracting his attention, although his eyes were apparently directly upon me, my confidence was quickly restored. I continued on across the room as nonchalantly as though I had been in my own quarters in Helium.

The royal apartments seemed interminable and though I was constantly seeking a way out of them into one of the main corridors of the palace, I was instead constantly stumbling into places where I did not

care to be and where I had no business —sometimes with considerable embarrassment, as when I entered a cozy, private apartment in the women's quarters at a moment when I was convinced they were not expecting strange gentlemen.

I would not turn back, however, for I had no time to lose, and crossing the room I followed another short corridor only to leap from the frying-pan into the fire—I had entered the forbidden apartment of the Jeddara herself. It is a good thing for the royal lady that it was I and not Haj Osis who came thus unexpectedly upon her, for her position was most compromising, and from his harness I judged that her good-looking companion was a slave. In disgust I retreated, for there was no other exit from the apartment, and presently I stumbled, entirely by accident, upon one of the main corridors of the palace—a busy corridor filled with slaves, warriors and courtiers, with men, women and children passing to and fro upon whatever business called them, or perhaps seated upon the carved benches that lined the walls.

I WAS not yet accustomed to my new and surprising state of invisibility. I could see the people about me and it seemed inevitable that I must be seen. For a moment I had hesitated in the doorway that had led me to the corridor. A slave girl, approaching along the corridor, turned suddenly toward the doorway where I stood. She was looking directly at me, yet her gaze appeared to pass entirely through me. For an instant I was filled with consternation and then, realizing that she was about to collide with me, I stepped quickly to one side. She passed by me, but it was evident that she sensed my presence for she paused and looked quickly about, an expression of puzzled surprise in her eyes. Then, to my immense relief, she passed on through the doorway.

She had not seen me, though doubtless she had heard me as I stepped aside. With a feeling of renewed confidence I now joined the throng in the corridor, threading my way in and out among the people to avoid contact with them and searching diligently all the while for the entrance to a ramp leading upward. This I presently discovered and it was not long thereafter that I reached the upper level of the palace, where a short search brought me to the guardroom at the foot of the ramp leading to the royal hangars.

Idling in the guardroom, the warriors then off duty were engaged in various pursuits. Some were cleaning their harness and polishing their metal; two were playing at jetan, while others were rolling tiny numbered spheres at a group of numbered holes —a fascinating game of chance, called yano, which is, I presume, almost as old as Barsoomian civilization. The room was filled with the laughter and oaths of fighting men. How alike are warriors the world over! But for their harness and their metal they might have been a detachment of the palace guard at Helium.

PASSING among them I ascended the ramp to the roof where the hangars stood. Two warriors on duty at the top of the ramp almost blocked my further progress. It would be a narrow squeeze to pass between them, and I feared detection. As I paused I could not but overhear their conversation.

"I tell you that he was struck from behind," said one. "He never knew what killed him!" I knew that they were talking about the guardsman I had killed.

"But whence came his assassin?" demanded the other.

"The padwar believes it may have been a fellow member of the guard. There will be an investigation and we shall all be questioned."

"It was not I," said the other. "He was my best friend."

"Nor was it I."

"He had a way with women. Perhaps—"

MY attention was distracted and their conversation terminated by the footsteps of a warrior running rapidly up the ramp. My position was now most precarious. The ramp was narrow and the man coming from behind might easily bump into me. I must, therefore, pass the sentries immediately and make my way to the roof. There was just sufficient room between the warrior at my left and the sidewall of the ramp for me to pass through, if he did not step back. With all the stealth that I could summon I edged myself slowly behind him and you may rest assured that I breathed a sigh of relief when I had passed him.

The warrior ascending the ramp had now reached the two men. "The assassin of the hangar sentry has been discovered," he said. "He is none other than the spy from Jahar who called himself Hadron of Hastor

and who, with the other spy, Nur An, was sentenced to die the Death. Through some miracle he escaped and has returned to the palace of Haj Osis. Besides the hangar sentry, he has slain Yo Seno, but he was captured after attacking the prince, Haj Alt. Again he has escaped and he is now at large in the palace. The padwar of the guard has sent me to direct you to redouble your watchfulness. Great will be the reward of him who captures Hadron of Hastor, dead or alive."

"By my metal, I'd like to see him try to escape this way," said one of the sentries. "He'll never come here by daylight."

I SMILED as I walked quickly toward the hangar. To reach the roof without disarranging my robe of invisibility was difficult, but I finally accomplished it. Before me lay the empty roof; no ship was in sight, but I smiled again to myself, knowing well that it was there. I looked about for the eye of the periscope that would reveal the craft's presence to me, but it was not visible. However, that did not concern me greatly since I realized that it might be turned in the opposite direction. It was only necessary for me to walk to where I had left the ship, and this I did, feeling ahead of me with extended hands.

I crossed the roof from one side to the other, but found no ship. That I was perplexed goes without saying. I most certainly knew where I had left the ship, but it no longer was there. Perhaps a wind had moved it slightly, and with this thought in mind I searched another section of the roof, but with equal disappointment. By now I was truly apprehensive and thereupon I set about a systematic search of the roof until I had covered every square foot of it and was convinced beyond doubt that the worst of disasters had befallen me—my ship was gone; but where? Indeed the compound of invisibility had its drawbacks. My ship might be and probably was at no great distance from me, yet I could not see it. A gentle wind was blowing from the southwest. If my ship had risen from the roof, it would drift in a northeasterly direction, but though I strained my eyes toward that point of the compass I could discern nothing of the tiny eye of the periscope.

I must admit that for a moment I was well nigh discouraged. It seemed that always when success was about within my grasp some malign fate snatched it away—but presently I shook this weak despondency from me and with squared shoulders faced the future and whatever it might bring.

For a few moments I considered my position in all its aspects and sought to discover the best solution of my problem. I must rescue Tavia, but I felt that it would be useless to attempt to do so without a ship, therefore I must have a ship and I knew that ships were just beneath me in the royal hangars. At night these hangars would be closed and locked and watched over by sentries into the bargain. If I would have a ship I must take it now and depend upon the swiftness and boldness of my act for its success.

Royal flyers are usually fast flyers and if the ships of Haj Osis were no exception to this general Barsoomian rule, I might hope to outdistance pursuit could I but pass the hangar sentry.

Of one thing I was certain: I could not accomplish that by remaining upon the roof of the hangar—so I cautiously descended, choosing a moment when the attention of the sentries was directed elsewhere, for there was always danger that my robe might blow aside, revealing my limbs.

ONCE on the roof again, I slipped quickly into the hangar and inspecting the ships I selected one that I was sure would carry four with ease and which, from its lines, gave token of considerable speed.

Clambering to the deck, I took my place at the controls; very gradually I elevated the ship about a foot from the floor; then I opened the throttle wide.

Directly ahead of me, through the open doorways of the hangar, the sentries were standing upon the opposite side of the room. As the ship leaped into the sunlight they voiced simultaneously a cry of surprise and alarm. Like brave warriors they sprang forward with drawn long swords and I could see that they were going to try to board me before I could gain altitude—but presently one of them halted wide-eyed and stood aside.

"Blood of our first ancestor," he cried. "There is no one at the controls!"

The second man had evidently discovered this simultaneously; he too shrank aside and with whirling propeller I shot upward from the royal hangar of the Jed of Tjanath.

Even more amazing situations confront Hadron of Hastor in his endeavor to rescue his friends—in the next installment, in our forthcoming August issue.

Goofer Dust

The dark history of Skilletface Pegram, who took a job as porter on a bus and accumulated a huge cargo of trouble.

By
ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

"Heah Frisco's five; gimme de package," Gladstone whispered to the new porter.

AN outgoing airmail-plane suddenly zoomed low in the December dusk, and Skilletface Pegram left the steering-wheel of his truck without pausing to shut off the gas. Right after which, the truck partially climbed a tree, and Skilletface got four feet farther into a near-by culvert pipe than any darky his size had ever been before.

Sheepishly, some minutes later, he emerged to view the wreckage of his truck and job. A crowd of his co-citizens flocked excitedly from adjacent alleys.

"Huccome you git down off dat truck so fas', boy?" an eyewitness sought information.

"Ol' airplane," explained Mr. Pegram. "Once when I wuz fightin' de waw, ol' Germans drap coal-scuttle full of dynamite out one dem planes right by me. Took Gen'l Puhshing an' nine dem M. P. boys to git me back from whar at I went. Dem things makes me nuhvous ever since."

"Whut de white folks whut own yo' truck gwine say?"

"Say plenty—but I aint gwine be dar list'nin'. I knows when a job's done played out."

"You sho is ruin dat one! Whut you gwine do now?"

Skilletface felt in his pockets. "Aint need do nothin' yit," he summarized his findings. "I *got* a quawter."

"I knows whar at you c'n git a new job dat's pahtly out of town," volunteered another member of the assemblage.

"Says whar?"

"Down at de bus station. Craves a boy to pohter on de D'mop'lis bus. W'ars a white coat an' sees de country."

"All I's li'ble see is lot of baggage to move 'bout," returned Mr. Pegram pessimistically.

"D'mop'lis sho be good place fo' you to spen' yo' spar' time twel yo' white folks calm down 'bout dis truck," pointed out the informer practically.

THUS, despite the wealth in his pocket, Skilletface's feet got to complicating his future by easing him gradually toward the bus terminal. He could see hiring-out coming on. Which accounted within an hour for the bus station-master's eyes resting on

a pair of feet attached by thin shanks to a darky holding his hat with both hands.

"Get the hell out of here!" he greeted him without raising his eyes above the patched blue overalls.

Skilletface grinned for the first time since the wreck. These new white-folks knew how to treat a boy right.

"Yassuh, sho is. Come to git de job."

"*What* job?"

"Pohterin' on de bus. He'ps de white folks travel. Fu'nishes my own whisk-broom fo' de bresh-off."

"I'll bet you do! What else is your idea of portering?"

"Rushes round wid de suitcases. W'ars white coat an' pa'r nice pants. Is you got ol' pa'r pants whut you wants sell me, suh?"

"There you go! Trying to get in debt to me already so I wont fire you!"

"Yassuh," agreed Skilletface. "When my bus go out?"

"One o'clock tomorrow. To Demopolis. Tell the station porter to give you that old pair of gray pants in my locker then—and I'm charging them to your first day's pay. What's your name?"

"Name? G'awge, suh; but ev'body call me Skilletface, 'count whut my wife done to hit once wid a fryin'-pan."

"All right, Skilletface! Pay you a dollar a day. Make the rest with your whisk-broom."

"Yassuh, sho is. Aint nobody bresh 'em off like me."

SKILLETFACE drifted for Fourth Avenue. White folks were all right when you knew how to handle them. Lot of funny-looking ones traveling by bus, though. Like that hard-boiled looking gentleman sitting right outside the office door where Skilletface had hired out.

Just across Eighteenth street, Skilletface looked back—and there was the same hard-boiled looking gentleman right behind him.

"Just a minute, dinge," he said out of one side of his mouth. Then, as Mr. Pegram paused distrustfully: "Was that you hired out on that Demopolis bus?"

"Yassuh." Skilletface didn't like him, but civility always paid.

"Good enough! I've got a business that needs a good reliable man traveling between here and there. Little delivering to do that pays good. Are you on?"

"Cap'n,"—Skilletface scratched his head, —"licker jes' natu'ally take up too much room on de bus—"

"Liquor? Who said liquor? You've got me wrong, boy. It's just some little packages—put 'em in your pocket."

"Yassuh, dat's diff'ent," agreed Skilletface.

"Dollar a trip for you," continued the white man. He didn't look so hard now, talking about dollars this way—and maybe he couldn't help his eyes shifting all the time like he was watching for somebody coming around the corner.

"Goes out at one o'clock tomorrer," Mr. Pegram closed the trade.

"Meet me back of the bus station at twelve-thirty, then. My name's—er—Hagan; but you'll know me."

WITH business looking up, Mr. Pegram slid into a pool-parlor with barbecue attachments. No need to nurse his quarter longer, with all this big money in sight. And there he discovered that it is only the rich that fortune really smiles upon. It was smiling upon him in disguise now, in the shape of Frisco Johnson. Frisco was a small darky with a lot of irons in the fire —some of them of a mysterious nature.

"Gimme yo' check," he greeted the incoming Skilletface, whom he knew of old.

"Add piece of pie an' some ice cream settin' on top 'f hit," that gentleman immediately increased his order.

"Whut you doin' heah durin' truckin'-houahs?" Frisco questioned.

Skilletface told him—partly.

"Aint dat lucky! *Aint* dat lucky!"

"Lucky fo' who?" queried Skilletface suspiciously. No one had ever hung medals upon Frisco for altruism.

"Fo' you—an' me. Needs manager fo' my D'mop'lis branch—an' heah you come!"

"Cain't stay dar cep'n at nights," demurred Skilletface. "'Bleeged to bresh off de white folks on de bus gwine back an' fo'th daytimes."

"Dis heah's a night business," countered Frisco. "Needs jes' whut you's doin'—a manager whut go back an' fo'th. I gives you, de goods heah, an' you sells hit in D'mop'lis dat night an' fotch me back de money nex' day. Us splits de profits even."

"Licker jes' natu'ally take up too much room in de bus—" Mr. Pegram launched into his stock objection.

But it began to look as though Alabama had finally gone dry, for again came what was beginning to be a familiar protest:

"Who say licker? You's got me wrong, boy. Dis heah business is Goofer Dust—"

Mr. Hagan bored significantly into Skilletface's back with a fountain pen.

SKILLETFACE'S eyes stretched and stayed so. Rumor had had it in Tittisville for some time that Frisco was profitably leagued with the powers of darkness, as exemplified in such potent powders and charms as Adam and Eve, High John the Conqueror, Chasing-away Goods and the like. Suitably armed with them, a buyer could keep a wife, chase off a rival, slip out of jail, and accomplish other desirable ends miraculously. There was profit, honor and cold chills in dealing in such commodities.

"All you got do," Frisco followed his advantage, "is git yo'se'f knowed in D'mop-'lis as my manager dar. I cain't go myse'f 'count somep'n whut a jedge say 'bout me in de courthouse dar. An' us splits de profits even: you gits ten per cent of 'em."

Skilletface wrapped himself around the pie and ice-cream and felt better about everything. This bus business was what a smart man made it, it seemed. Twenty-four hours ago he was driving a truck: now he was porter on a bus, seeing the country at big money; and with two profitable but private side-lines. Just showed what brains and looking reliable would do for a boy!

"Whar at I git de goods?" he indicated his acquiescence.

"In de alley back of de bus station, at noontime tomorrer. I fotch 'em to you—pocket-size' package."

That alley began to sound crowded to Skilletface, but a good business man could keep his connections separated. "Be dar from 'leven 'clock on," he stated, "he'pin' load de busses an' 'tendin' to my business."

RIGHT spang in the middle of the biggest bustle around the bus station next day was Skilletface. No bag was too big, no brush-off too arduous, for the new porter. Everything ever said about new brooms fitted him. So did the station-master's old trousers. And his natty duck coat. Skilletface was all over the block in them, until at noon Frisco had to look twice to identify him. Then he handed him a small package, evidently in a paper box, carefully wrapped.

"You gives 'em to big cullud boy whut meets you at de bus station down dar," he instructed. "Fotch back five dollars from him fo' whut's inside dis box. An' don't say nothin'."

Another pause in portering thirty minutes later furnished Skilletface with lunch-time and a meeting with his Mr. Hagan of the restless eyes. Again a small paper-wrapped pasteboard box changed hands in a hurry. This Mr. Hagan seemed to be all the time afraid somebody was going to see or overhear him.

"You've got to remember the name and description," he urged meaningly on his emissary. "Can't be writing any names on anything in this business."

"Sho cain't," agreed Skilletface, who only read by a strong light and when he had lots of time in which to attend to it.

"That man will be looking for you," concluded Mr. Hagan, "as soon as you get away from the bus station a little piece. Don't give it to anybody else, or it'll be the jail for you."

AT one o'clock the Demopolis bus rolled forth, overloaded. So was Skilletface—mentally. "Lef'-hand pocket fo' de Goofer Dust—right-hand fo' de white man," he chanted to himself as he eyed the passengers. Nothing to do but ride now, and keep his pockets straight. "Goofer Dust fo' de cullud folks—lef'—naw, *right*-han' pocket fo' de white gent'men," he rehearsed as they rolled through Bessemer. This portering was all profit. At Tuscaloosa everybody would get out, and Mr. Pegram counted upon his whisk being the most prominent thing in that ancient town for a few minutes, at least. He could all but jingle now the eight dimes that would certainly ensue from such activity. Not to speak of his side-lines. And some boys were still driving trucks!

"Right—naw, *left*-han' pocket fo' de Goofer Dust; left-han' fo' de cullud boy; right's fo'—"

Roll and rumble and road had done for Skilletface just here, and he slept upon the baggage. So much so that it took two passengers and an irate driver to arouse him at Tuscaloosa; whereupon he instantly hit the ground and began brushing off the bus before he fully came to himself and switched to more remunerative areas.

And it was at Tuscaloosa that he had his first contact with disillusionment. People traveled by bus, it seemed, partly because it was cheaper. And the next phase of their economy applied to porters. He had accumulated three grunts, five thank-yous, and thirteen cents when the big bus was again humming south.

"Sho is good thing I got dis heah other business to lean back on fo' my eatin'-vit tles," he reflected mournfully. "Le's see—right-han' fo' de white man; lef'-han' fo' de Goofer Dust. Dollar a—"

Three practice planes from Maxwell Field winging west above the road sent Skilletface burrowing frantically into a stack of baggage.

"Jes' natu'ally cain't stand dem things ever since ol' Germans drap a big 'splosion off one of 'em right 'longside whar at I wuz fightin' de waw," he explained shamefacedly to the amused passengers as he cautiously emerged. "I gits hell-shocked."

MEANTIME, down in Demopolis, Samson G. Bates, the "big nigger" of Baptist Hill, sat in the rear of a Strawberry Street combination barber-shop and speakeasy, and awaited his henchman Gladstone Smith. Whatever went on in colored lodge, voodoo, financial or scofflaw circles, Samson had an interest in and a profit out of. And whatever of drudgery or dirty work this involved, Gladstone did.

Gladstone, who owed Samson too much money to have a voice any longer in his own affairs, shuffled dispiritedly into view. He was a tall black boy who started out in a big way as to feet and then gradually dwindled discouragingly upward into a peak above the ears. Luck had lost his address years ago.

"Wants you git on down to po-lice headquawters fo' me," Samson greeted him.

"Done been lock' up in de jail-house in yo' place twice a'ready dis yeah," grumbled Gladstone.

"Dis aint no lock-up. Wants you tell 'em somep'n—"

"Only time dey ever b'lieves *me* is when I says 'guilty' in front de jedge—"

"Dey'll b'lieve dis. Dat's whut I's kickin' 'bout. Dey's *too* willin' to b'lieve hit a'ready. You tell 'em you's sore wid me, an' so you's infawmin' on me—dat I's peddlin' *coke*."

Gladstone's eyes protruded like pegs. Narcotics meant more than ninety days sitting around in a warm jail-house.

"You knows better'n dat!" he gasped.

"Yeah, but *dey* aint! I done built up a good business wid dese niggers round heah sellin' 'em luck balls an' chahms an' conjure an' Goofer Dust; an' po-lice thinks I's dealin' in dope. Aint no way to cl'ar myse'f *good* like sendin' 'em a tip-off by you dat's wrong, an' den lettin' 'em cotch me wid maybe nothin' on me but li'l he'pful Goofer Dust. After dat dey lemme 'lone mo'."

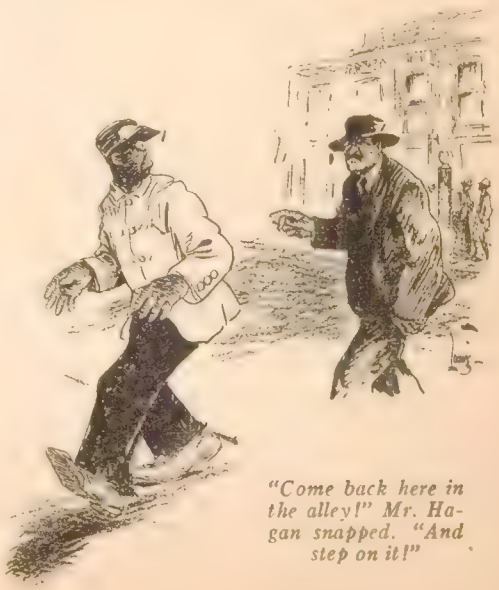
Gladstone's mouth joined his eyes till it hung open like an admiring steam shovel.

"Whut you want me say?" he bowed to superior intelligence.

"Le's see: Frisco sendin' me down de Goofer Dust on de bus git heah t'night, fo' dat Amos nigger. But Amos cain't raise de money fo' hit twel day aft' tomorrer. So you tells po-lice dey c'n cotch me wid de dope on me any time tomorrer. Make out like you mad wid me 'bout double-crossin' you, an' you tellin' on me, see?"

"Aint see nothin' but trouble."

"Wants you meet de bus t'night, too, an' git de Goofer Dust from de pohter on hit fo' me, too. I'll be gone tonight, on business, an' aint want hit wid me. But you be



"Come back here in the alley!" Mr. Hagan snapped. "And step on it!"

sho give hit to me befo' breakfas', you heah?"

"Firs' thing you see in de mawnin' be me," promised Gladstone fervently. "Cain't sleep good wid dat stuff about."

WHICH was the local situation when the bus stopped in Demopolis that evening. Foremost in the dusky wave that enveloped it was the gangling and distrustful Gladstone, with five dollars in his hand.

"Heah Frisco's five; gimme de package," he whispered to the industrious new porter.

Skilletface scratched around in his pockets and dug up a small soiled parcel. Everything was working out fine. Already he was half-done and everything was going just right—including the money being in one-dollar bills, so he could abstract his commission immediately.

All he needed now was for the white consignee to show up also. Then he could begin showing Baptist Hill what a metropolitan boy with two dollars in his pockets really considered a good line of language and dice-slinging.

And even that worked out. In the shadows outside the bus station as he handed out the last suitcase was a strange white gentleman with shifty sort of eyes that reminded Skilletface of Mr. Hagan.

"Psssst! Porter!" this white man attracted his attention sibilantly. "You got it?"

"Got whut? From who?" answered Mr. Pegram cautiously. White folks were powerful particular about who got what. Had him sorting out his packages in his pants pockets all the way down, keeping everything straight.

"From—er—Mr. Hagan."

That clicked too. And not having but one package left made it still easier. Skilletface pocketed another dollar and pitied the millions of people working for money when they might be portering on a bus.

The up trip next morning was but a tipless repetition of the down. Nothing happened until arrival at the Birmingham terminal. Then too much started happening—beginning with the vastly excited state of the hitherto coldly calm Mr. Hagan.

"Come back here in the alley!" he snapped at Skilletface as the last suitcase struck the sidewalk. "And step on it!"

Skilletface thought of forty or fifty other things he would rather do. This Mr. Hagan began to sound exactly like an eight-minute egg in action. And it didn't look like a good time to get up an argument with him.

"What the hell'd you do with that package I gave you?" he demanded savagely when privacy had been achieved.

"G-g-gives hit to de white gent'man whut ax me fo' hit. He know yo' name," stuttered the white-coated courier. "Spend all my time keepin' my pockets straight."

"What did you give him?" persisted his patron. "I got a wire from him that all you gave him was a box with some kind of fool powders in it that *wasn't what I gave you at all!"*

Skilletface couldn't hear for thinking! Had he got his pockets—and packages—mixed after all? And if so—

"Cap'n, whut in dat other li'l box I carries?" he yelped. "De one you gimme!"

Mr. Hagan's mental disturbance seemed but to increase.

"Do you mean you gave *my* box to somebody else?" he questioned hoarsely. "Somebody that wasn't expecting it?"

Skilletface's brain began limping in alarmed circles at Mr. Hagan's newest manner. Sure was a rookus when a boy got balled up on his boxes. But always tell the truth when you're smoked out, was his cardinal tenet.

"I must 'a' give hit to dat long tall nigger I wuz carryin' 'nother li'l box fo'," he speculated miserably.

Which seemed but to excite this peculiar white man the more. *"Who* did you give it to? Quick!" he cried. "Got to wire him!"

Skilletface shook his head.

"Aint know he name. Jes' know whut he look like. Long skinny nigger in D'mop'lis, got big feet."

"Don't know his name! Boy, you don't even know what you've done! There's enough 'snow' in the box you gave that coon to kill him if he swallows it!"

SKILLETFACE didn't know the directions for taking Goofer Dust. In the emergency he threw all his strength to his mind by sitting down in the alley and thus taking the strain off his legs.

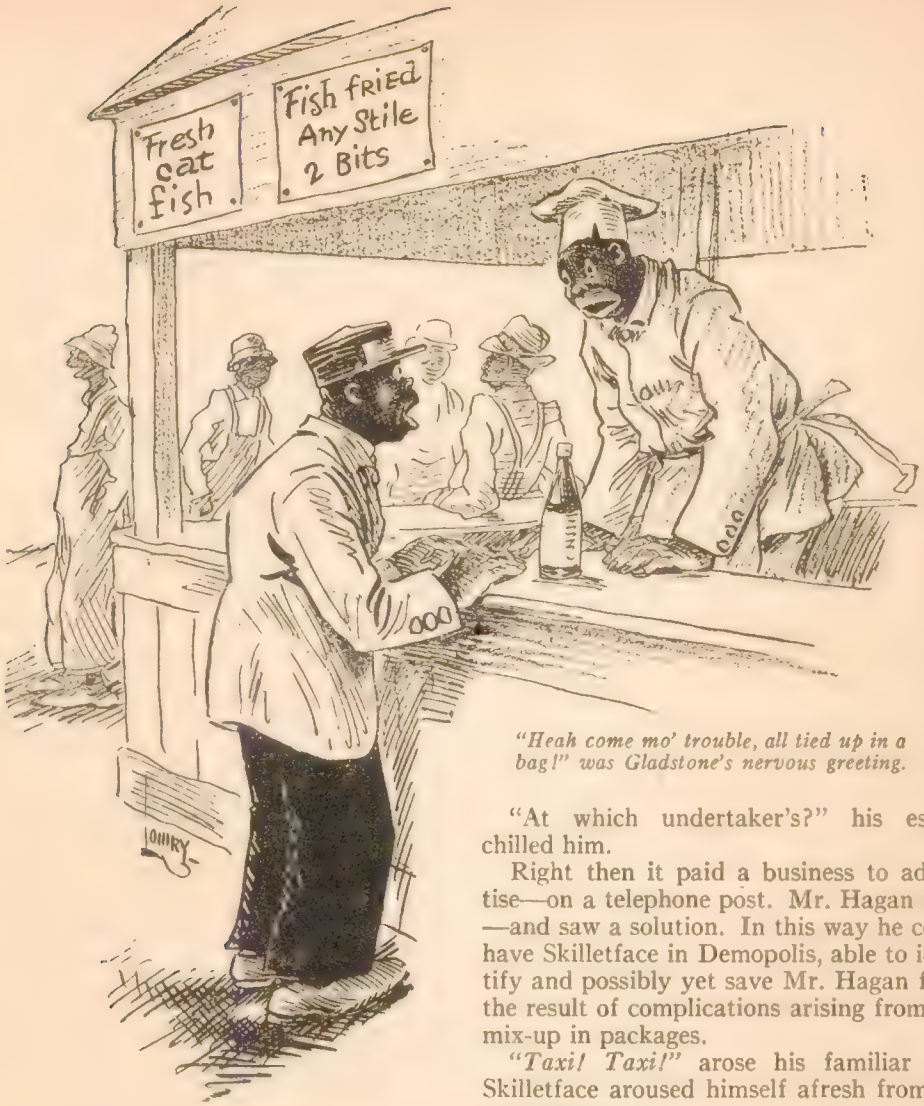
"Maybe Frisco know dat boy's name," was the result of his mental travail.

"Where's he?" Mr. Hagan kicked him erect again. "They'll *hang* you for this!"

"Over yon, on Sevumteenth Street, mealtimes."

"Taxi! Taxi!" Skilletface's white gentleman was bellowing in the alley mouth before Skilletface got his breath back.

"Fourth and Seventeenth!" rasped Mr. Hagan at the driver as the door slammed.



"Heah come mo' trouble, all tied up in a bag!" was Gladstone's nervous greeting.

But Frisco was missing from his accustomed haunts—which was the same as losing the Demopolis directory. The face of Mr. Hagan began changing from gray to a sickly green right before the alarmed eyes of the bus porter. His fright became so contagious that Skilletface's teeth chattered. It had never before been so impressed on him how important it was to know a strange negro's name.

Frantic and fruitless consultation of timetables—bus and railway—followed. Nothing was scheduled out in time.

"I'd know dat nigger if I see him. Sho gwine look him up when I goes down on de bus tomorrer," contributed the anxious-eyed Skilletface as he shuffled in the rear of his hard-faced companion in what was beginning to look like crime.

"At which undertaker's?" his escort chilled him.

Right then it paid a business to advertise—on a telephone post. Mr. Hagan read—and saw a solution. In this way he could have Skilletface in Demopolis, able to identify and possibly yet save Mr. Hagan from the result of complications arising from the mix-up in packages.

"Taxi! Taxi!" arose his familiar cry. Skilletface aroused himself afresh from his numbness.

"Whar us gwine now?" he asked importantly. White folks couldn't get along without a boy any more.

"Demopolis!" Mr. Hagan snarled at him. "West End Field!" he likewise snarled at the driver. "And step all over it!"

Skilletface settled back in a corner of the cab. He'd at least have a nice hundred-and-fifty-mile taxi ride before they hanged him. He always had wanted to watch one of those little meters go around.

But long before they were out of the city the cab stopped.

"Get out!" instructed Mr. Hagan briefly.

Skilletface batted his eyes. He had thought they were going to Demopolis. He said as much.

"You're damned right you are!" concurred his guard. "In an airplane!"

The ground came up and hit Mr. Pegram in the back of the head, on account of the way his knees suddenly walked out on him. Dope or no dope, as soon as those knees returned to service, this Mr. Hagan was going to have the same sort of trouble with him that General Pershing had had over in France, too.

BUT General Pershing, it proved, had merely lacked Mr. Hagan's technique. Getting Skilletface into a plane was easy when you gripped his belt with one hand and bored significantly into his back with a fountain pen held in the other. Only Skilletface didn't know it was a pen.

Then the long down-field run, the take-off, the sudden sense of leaving the world behind, and the awful sensation of realizing that he had. Skilletface ran the whole gamut of fear, from nausea to numbness. But the plane kept right on. Bessemer was going by below before he could get his eyes screwed shut. And he hadn't known before that anything could overtake one of those A. G. S. passenger trains.

Then, miraculously soon, there was a big quarry and cement plant ahead below; a bridge and the confluence of two rivers between white cliffs, and the plane was nosing down into Demopolis!

Skilletface forgot his fright and swelled. Important people didn't have time to mess with trains and busses. They rode airplanes and spat on eagles. Sure would help his standing on Baptist Hill, too, when they heard how he had come this time!

Then the plane and Skilletface's pride hit earth with a bump. The reason for his arrival thus, smote him. The machine hadn't taxied to a stop before Mr. Hagan had him by the belt again. And *"Taxi! Taxi!"* he was splitting the local welkin.

"Tell him where to go," barked Mr. Hagan as they at length entered one.

"Baptis' Hill—an' make hit snappy!" instructed Skilletface importantly, in his best taxicab manner.

But on Baptist Hill there was an older excitement that did not dim but merely complicated with arrival of Mr. Pegram and party. The Hill was all upset over somebody's being in jail. Facts and identities issued slowly from the chaos.

"White folks git Samson G. *Bates* in de jail-house!" an awed denizen was at length explaining in Skilletface's hearing to a late-comer on the scene.

"Thought dat long tall Gladstone boy done all Samson's goin' to jail fo' him?" the late-comer gave vent to his amazement.

"Git ol' Samson hisse'f dis time. Somebody done tip 'em off las' night. Say he been sellin' dope. Done took him to the jail-house to s'arch him. Dat 'big nigger' sho in a jam is dey find hit on him. Maybe 'taint Goofer Dust *dis* time."

At this confirmation of his fears Skilletface explored new areas of dizziness. He was too close to this fire to keep from getting burned. And undeniably this important Samson was in a powerful pile of trouble—arrested for dope-peddling with the evidence damningly on him through Skilletface's own earlier error. In thus far escaping the cemetery through this same blunder Mr. Bates had now merely achieved a fine start toward Federal prison.

And another cold-handed thought gripped Mr. Pegram's very heart just here: if sufficiently pressed and promised, Samson might go into dangerous details as to how he had come by this false Goofer Dust. And where was Skilletface then?

Skilletface suddenly became air-minded. Nothing but a plane could get him away from Demopolis fast enough now.

But again Mr. Hagan forestalled his flight with the customary familiar grip on his belt.

"I'm leaving here in that plane *right now,"* he hissed in Skilletface's nearest ear. "It'll look better for me if you stay here for the finish."

"Whose finish?" was uppermost in Mr. Pegram's mind and mouth.

"Yours—if they find out you gave that Demopolis boy that dope. Nobody's dead yet. So I'm through—and leaving the rest to you. I'll send you a good lawyer, maybe —from Mexico!"

SKILLETFACE found himself looking east and west at the same time. He was on his own resources in the middle of a situation that was fuller of possibilities than a blaze in a fireworks factory. And, watching the plane that had brought him soar into the west, it came to him that his difficulties were just beginning. Also that trouble never sat well on an empty stomach.

Consulting his nose in respect to a remedy for his current hollowness, that organ led him unerringly to the fried-fish stand of the other most worried darky in Demopolis. Recognition was mutual and startling.

"Heah come mo' trouble, all tied up in a bag!" was Gladstone's nervous greeting, as he slapped a plate of hot river cat on the

counter in front of Skilletface. "An' gimme de money fo' de fish in advance, bus boy—I's li'ble have leave heah any minute widout no time to collect hit from you in."

"Me an' you both!" amended Mr. Pegram lustily. "Whut *you* got dat you thinks is trouble?"

"White folks aint lemme in the jail-house—"

Skilletface's jaw narrowly escaped dropping into his plate. There was something funny about this: even up in Birmingham the white folks met a boy at least halfway in such desires.

"Whut dat you says?" he demanded incredulously through a mouthful of fish.

"Says been tryin' all mawnin' to git in de jail-house. White folks aint lemme."

"Whut dat got do wid yo' maybe leavin' heah so fas'? Boy whut cain't git in de jail-house today sound lucky to me. Figurin' how to stay out's whut's makin' bunions on my brain right now—since dat box business."

Gladstone's ears pricked up at the last two words. "Dat whut git *me* in bad," he proffered miserably, "—dat li'l box whut you gives me fo' Samson. Soon's he git out, he gwine bust me down wid a bed-slat 'bout hit. Dat whut I been tryin' git in to tell him 'bout."

SKILLETFACE'S heart turned over twice. "When you give Samson dat box?" he queried fearfully.

"Dat whut de rookus 'bout. Samson in de jail-house fo' peddlin' coke, but he aint never sell no dope. He jes' git me to *tell* de po-lice he wuz. Den de box dey finds on him when dey s'arch him s'posed tu'n out be nothin' but Goofer Dus', an' make hit look like dey been 'spicionin' him wrong all time."

Laboriously the terror-weakened mind of Skilletface wound its way through the Machiavellian mazes of Samson's scheme—only to perceive the ant within the amber. Right when Samson had arranged to plant innocence upon himself was no time to ball up the evidence: in mixing the boxes, Skilletface saw clearly now that he had marred past all mending the future of Samson G. Bates. Atlanta loomed indeed now—with Skilletface a co-defendant as soon as the facts started leaking out.

Yet, bad as that was, things could get worse. Gladstone's conversation confirmed it as he kept on talking, presenting a new angle:

"Cain't git in to 'splain to Samson," he resumed his complaint, "huccome I couldn't give him de box you brung, fo' ev'dence against him—"

Skilletface's heart leaped again. Like a young lamb in spring this time! The sun shone; birds sang! Samson didn't have the dope, after all! But then—and again night and numbing fear enshrouded him. Gladstone did it with his mouth, keeping on talking this way:

" 'Ca'ze *I* aint got dat box no mo'—"

IN all the spinning void that the world had become for him there was but one question now for Skilletface. Feebly he voiced it: " 'Fo' Gawd, nigger, who got dat box now?"

"Aint know," returned Gladstone evenly. "Nigger I aint see befo'. I tells him swaller hit in water, an' hit cure whut ail him—"

Skilletface quit seeing Atlanta and began to see electric chairs. He knew now how Mr. Hagan had felt when he had made a similar discovery that a deadly drug had gone astray! Driven from his daze, Skilletface hit the floor running.

"Whut'd he look like? Which way he go? Huccome he git hit?" he shot question after frantic question at the fuddled Gladstone. A life—two lives, indeed, since Skilletface's was also much involved in the matter—might even yet be saved if the idea would only penetrate Gladstone's thickened skull!

But, "Dat whut I been tryin' git in de jail-house an' tell Samson all mawnin'," persisted the one-idea-ed Gladstone patiently. "I lose dat li'l box las' night in a Frawg Bottom crap game to a new nigger whut'd already done win all my money."

Skilletface staggered in horror. It was time to tell all and flee far.

"Boy," he gibbered, "dat wa'n't no Goofer Dust—dat wuz *dope* in de box you lost! You done kill dat boy when you told him to swaller hit fo' whut ailed him! Whut you gwine do *now?*"

" 'Bout dat crap-game nigger? Aint gwine do nothin'. I—"

"Boy, you *got* to! You's done *ruin* dat nigger!"

"Sho is," conceded Gladstone, "but feels better 'bout hit now. I aint like dat nigger's looks nohow; dat huccome I shet him off from good luck—by slippin' out an' pourin' dat Goofer Dust in de creek befo' he win hit—an' fillin' de box back up wid sody dat de white folks gimme!"

Illustrated by Henry Thiede

"What I want from you two is the name and sailing-date of the boat. Get me those and I'll attend to the rest!"

Deep Water Men

"A Tale of Two Pawns" graphically sets forth a stirring drama of 1930 life at sea.

By STEPHEN HOPKINS ORCUTT

THE fog was not of the worst type, but thick enough in Piccadilly Circus to make the taxi-driver almost miss the man who was hailing him from the curb. Once inside, with the door closed, the fare mentioned a villa in one of the Kensington streets, just off the Gardens.

Here the caller was admitted by a butler who barely stifled an expression of obvious surprise and alarm. As he took the man's hat and coat, he whispered:

"Are you quite certain nobody followed you here?"

"Reasonably so. You can't see ten feet in this fog—no other car turned down the street after us—none stopped near here after I got out, on the opposite side of the street. I've never been here before, but of course I know the layout of the house. I will go into the study if nobody is there."

The butler returned to the drawing-room at the front of the house, where his mistress was talking with a man of the wealthy commercial type—who spoke flawless English when on his guard, but at times let slip just a hint of Continental accent.

"What is it, Perkins?" she asked. "I heard the street door close. Is some one calling?"

"It's Tarnovitch, Sonia—Tarnovitch himself!" replied the seeming butler with surprising familiarity. "Here in London—where he'll be locked up within fifteen minutes, if any of the Foreign Office or Scotland Yard men see him! Afterward, he'll not be seen again, anywhere—if they turn him over to the Quai d'Orsay!"

"My God! Suppose he has been followed here?"

"He says there is scarcely a possibility

of that—in this thick fog, and with the precautions he took."

"I've heard the name of Tarnovitch occasionally—it's usually mentioned with the sort of respect which borders upon fear," her caller observed. "Why is that? Who is the man, really?"

"Well—he's about the most frightfully efficient and unscrupulous executive there is in Moscow! Absolutely neutral in appearance—looks like any other man you'd pass in the street—but he's the very devil himself when he starts to carry out anything. If there's a situation which nobody else can handle without getting killed, Tarnovitch takes care of it—and escapes arrest. There are rewards out for him in five different countries—but they've never caught him yet!"

"I can't see why he comes here to your house—with the risk of compromising all of us who have been seen around London with you! Your fine impersonation of a wealthy young Austrian widow has been extremely valuable to the Council at Moscow. Even those of us who are known to be Russian *emigrés,* engaging in commercial affairs here, do not arouse suspicion in calling upon you. But if executives like this Tarnovitch are going to be seen here, there's no saying how soon suspicion will be aroused!"

"He wouldn't come unless there were strong reasons for it. Suppose we go in and hear about them."

AS they came into the study, Tarnovitch was smoking a cigarette in a big chair by the table—a personality so utterly commonplace that any police force in the world would have considered the man harmless. Yet they caught something like summer-lightning in the casual glance he gave the other man as they conventionally shook hands.

"Ah! . . . . The good Count Serge Balkanoff, who makes the so-comfortable living as agent for American motor-cars! We've not met before—but we've heard of each other—eh? Well—this may be opportune, Count; possibly you can give me information. Have either of you seen or heard of an Italian—one Cavaliere Luigi Montalo, supposed to represent a house doing a large business in airplane motors—handling government contracts—conferring with representatives of various governments?"

"Why—yes," replied Sonia. "Charming man—very much liked by everybody who has met him. He's supposed to be having frequent interviews with the Government people here."

"Oh, he would—he certainly would! He had interviews with several of the Commissars and the devil knows how many other people, in Moscow. I don't think he sold them any motors—but it's fairly certain that he somehow obtained lists of every secret agent we have in India at the present time and a good deal of data on our future plans for that territory! He's not an Italian at all—he is the Maharajah of Matiala—one of the most influential Princes in India, trusted by Hindus and Mohammedans alike. He's spilled what he knows to the Foreign Office here in London, and he's going back home immediately with enough facts—and following, when he gets there—to undo most of our work for the last three years. That recent bomb-affair in Delhi played right into his hands! I warned the Council not to let anything like that happen—the time isn't ripe for it! He has lists and memoranda which are just so much dynamite if ever he gets them jammed into the heads of his own people and those of the neighboring states. He mustn't reach India, with or without them—that's all! What I want from you two—and Ivan, who let me in—is simple enough. Just the name and sailing-date of the boat he's going home on. Get me those and I'll attend to the rest!"

"But—you daren't risk booking passage on the boat! . . . . Are you crazy? You'd be arrested before she pulls out!"

"Oh, that's a small detail—of no consequence. His Highness will be disguised, of course, probably as an Englishman—he speaks the language perfectly. His mother was a handsome Portuguese from Goa; he's white enough to pass for an Englishman. Just get me the name of the boat—and be sure there's no mistake about it!"

"That means bribing or seducing some Government man—not so easy a matter as you seem to fancy, Tarnovitch. But we'll do what we can."

"Hmph! . . . . You'd *better!*" There was a cold ferocity underlying the quiet words which made them shudder

IN the booking-office of the Lower India Steam Navigation Company, Ltd., was an agreeable young clerk named Jamieson. On the day after Tarnovitch's visit to the Baronin von Rothberg, this cheerful and obliging clerk was lunching with a girl from

another office, in a restaurant just off Leadenhall Street.

It happened by mere chance that, at the corner table behind him, there were two men who looked much like half a dozen others in the restaurant, and who spoke the same sort of shipping-office jargon that most of those in the room were using. One of these men was Tarnovitch.

At a table against the wall, behind the girl, sat one of the shipping-company managers, with a friend from Lloyd's. Nobody at these three tables had the slightest idea who those at the others were—until Jamieson began bragging a little to the girl about his Line. Young clerks may be divided into two general types—the grumblers, who consider themselves underpaid by their employers and not being given a fair chance—and the boosters, proud of their company, and its line of business. Jamieson was of the latter type; when the girl remarked disparagingly that his company's boats were all rather small as compared with the big Western ocean liners, he began assuring her that their annual turnover was larger than that of some owners who ran much bigger tonnage—that they were known as reliable craft, well-found, well-manned, and often selected by large concerns for the shipment of valuable cargo.

"Why—just take the *Jaipur,* now loading at Southampton!" he elaborated. "She's going out Saturday with four and a half millions in gold for one of the Calcutta banks—and one of the most influential men in all India is privately booked on her—a man with a big title, who'd be recognized at once if he went out P. &. O., but goin' on the *Jaipur* under another name because she doesn't carry much over a hundred in the saloon an' there's less chance for anyone knowin' him."

JAMIESON—the first pawn—had unconsciously lighted a fuse without thought of doing harm or of possible consequences. Gold is shipped frequently on a steamer, to one part of the world or another; the risk is considered so negligible that note of the shipment is often published in the daily press. Celebrities often travel *incognito*—and Jamieson had mentioned no names. At the worst, his manager probably would have said that he had been slightly indiscreet. But when he and the girl went out, the Lloyd's man said, in guarded tones:

"Can't blame the young chap for giving his Line a good name an' braggin' a bit to his girl—but one wishes that all clerks could be made to understand the value of a close mouth. This is the first I'd heard of that pukka-passenger bookin' on the *Jaipur!* As it happens, we've underwritten the boat an' her cargo of gold—an' the man—rather heavily. If all three go to the bottom, we'll be out of pocket a good bit more than we care to lose—to be frank!"

After the Lloyd's man and his friend went out, Tarnovitch and his companion called for another bottle of wine and began talking in undertones. There was nobody else within three or four tables of them.

"That was a bit of unexpected luck, Wochowski!" Tarnovitch chuckled. "Sonia and her lot have been pulling every wire they could—I happen to know that—but so far, they've not obtained a single trace of His Highness. That young fellow mentioned no names—but the 'man with a big title, who'd be recognized on the P. & O.,' simply can't be anyone but the Maharajah. That hint is good enough for me—I'm sailing on the *Jaipur,* myself! You see there's another point about that boat worth considering. We could divide up that gold among six or eight of us very comfortably, I think. Worth a little thought and planning—eh?"

"You mean book some of our lot on her, second class? Too much risk in the saloon! In fact, with the Government watching every port for you, I swear I can't see how you alone are going to book on that boat or sail on her!"

"Some other man will do the booking for me. And I'm taking none of our crowd with me—there'll be risk enough, looking out for myself. It occurs to me, however, that you can easily get a two-months' charter on some fast yacht or obsolete torpedo-boat at Marseilles or Toulon for a very small sum—pick up a four-inch Q/F rifle, standard, and four dozen shells—mount it on the forecastle-head. Also, you'll need radio-transmission and reception over a thousand-mile range, and a latest type radio-compass. For crew, two engineers, two stokers, cook, steward, navigator and radio-man, would be the minimum—and we've got all but the engineers and navigator in our own crowd. If we should have to ship three outsiders, it's a simple enough matter to eliminate 'em afterward! Here's really all there is to it: You'll listen in and hear the *Jaipur's* radio-messages every day; you'll know exactly where she is, and will have nine or ten days before she can reach Port Said. Run ahead and tie up in the Canal,

Willie was laid out by a stunning blow; then he was dressed in the suit his assailant had worn, and brutally heaved overboard.

somewhere, between Ismaïlia and Suez. When the conditions are just right, I'll manage to put the *Jaipur* ashore, helpless—and I'll send this message just before that: *'Sudermann and Company—Lombard Street, E. C. 3. Accept proposition at once.'* It'll be signed by whatever name I assume on the *Jaipur,* of course—so you pay no attention to the signature. If no other boat is within relaying distance, you can tell the *Jaipur* operator that you'll relay for him—but if you hear some boat picking it up, just take down the message and keep quiet. It'll mean that you're to close up with us and be within a mile when we go on the mud or rocks. Then the boat is helpless under your four-inch gun, and you can transfer the gold—you might take me and a couple of the passengers along as hostages, if that seems a good move at the time. You can batter away at the ship until the Master considers the risk to life too great and hands over the gold. He wont care to have his boat completely destroyed, either. You've got him foul! At all events, there's the rough plan—it's easily enough worked out. Any important changes you can radio to me in our secret code as soon as I've sent you some message over my assumed name. Understood?"

His companion nodded.

"By St. Michael, Tarnovitch, I can't see why that wouldn't work out!" he said.

ON the following Friday night the *Jaipur* was tied up to the outer wharf of the Empress dock at Southampton. Her gangplanks were out on the starboard side and her bow pointed down Southampton water, with her port side overlooking the River

Itchen and the mud-flats below Woolston for nearly a mile.

As there was a light fog over the rivers and flats, that side of the boat was in darkness—it was impossible to see a small boat which had been sculled around the point from the landing jetty on the River Test and which now rested against the side-plating of the steamer. A half-inch manila rope with a small steel-wire grapnel at the end of it was shoved up on a light fifteen-foot pole until it hooked over the top of the main-deck rail—and held. A man walked silently up the plates in sailor-fashion, hand over hand on the rope—and sat on the rail, pulling up the rope and pole after him. Again the rope and grapnel were pushed up on the pole until they caught on the B-deck rail, and the proceeding was repeated until the man reached the boat deck, stretching aft from the bridge—to which passengers were not admitted, except during hot nights in the tropics when an awning was spread over it and they were allowed to sleep there in deck-chairs.

THE man who had gone up so quietly now lowered the pole on the grapnel until his companion in the boat took it off, and hooked on it a large suitcase, which was noiselessly hauled up. Then the boat melted away in the fog just before a harbor-police boat came around the point and threw her searchlight along the water-line of the *Jaipur's* plating. The man on the boat deck looked down with a grin. He had timed his boarding exactly right—the same police boat having passed, going the other way, not twenty minutes before. Picking up the suitcase and rope, he stepped aft to the Number Eight boat—around to the narrow space between its pointed stern and the rail, which ended at the davit. The radio-house was within fifteen feet of him, but the operators were ashore for the night and its only windows were in the side looking forward—the door being on the starboard side. The man, well concealed from any of the crew who might happen to step aft from the bridge, calmly unlaced a four-foot stretch of the canvas boat-cover—which was sufficient to let him shove in the suitcase, crawl inside, and lace up the canvas again. He had on a heavy ulster, which he knew he would need during the night, and had eaten a hearty meal before starting out in the smallboat. Unfolding the sail from the boat's equipment, and wrapping it about him, he went to sleep.

When daylight came, he glanced out through the lacing and saw that the fog was even thicker than during the night—which suited his purpose very well, though he had figured out his course in broad daylight if it happened that way. Anticipating that somebody certainly would take a look into each boat, he first took a swig of coffee from one of the two hot thermos-bottles in the suitcase and ate two sandwiches. Then he put two more into his pocket—and stowed the suitcase under the stern-seat where it wouldn't be noticed unless the canvas cover were unlaced for half the length of the boat. A ship's boats rarely have life-preservers stowed in them because they take up too much room—but they are things which every seafaring man considers a part of the general equipment wherever he finds it. He is less apt to question their being in any particular place than almost any other article on the boat. So, while the fog was still thick, the man emerged from the boat and took from a big locker at the side of the radio-house eight life-preservers, which he proceeded to lay along the bottom of the boat on the side next to the deck. Lacing up the cover again, he now stretched himself out on the thwarts and began reading a paper-covered novel taken from a pocket. With this and occasional napping on the folded sail, he got through the day comfortably enough until nearly three in the afternoon.

It was now getting toward the time when a search would be made of the boats and every part of the steamer except the cargo-holds if one were going to be made at all—as she sailed at the crest of the double-tide, around four o'clock. So, stretching himself under the thwarts on the side next the deck, he pulled the line of life-preservers over him until he was entirely concealed by them. Ten minutes after he was quietly settled, the second mate came aft from the bridge with a detective inspector from Scotland Yard and made what would have been considered a close inspection of every boat. It was less foggy now, but a drizzling rain made the light none too good. Loosening the lacing for a couple of feet at the end of each boat, they threw the beam from a pocket flashlight around the inside—then laced up the canvas again. According to their figuring, a human being couldn't be concealed in a ship's boat which had no space that was out of sight. They didn't consciously notice the life-preservers—or wouldn't have given them a second thought

if they had. When the "All Ashore" whistle blew, the man could see the second officer at the stern, overseeing the warping-lines so that they wouldn't foul the screws —the mate forward, on the fo'c'stle-head, and the Master, pacing from one end of the bridge to the other. Finally they were clear —the band playing a lively air as they headed downstream. And as soon as the second mate had gone forward, the man watched his chance to crawl out of the boat while the Captain was at the starboard end of the bridge with the wheel-house, chart-room and his own cabin, between them. An after-companion, with a hood, came up between the boat and the radio-house; the man was able to slip down this without being seen and mingle with the passengers along the starboard gangway of the A deck.

The passengers had wondered at the unusual strictness with which their tickets and passports had been scrutinized both at the entrance to the dock and at the foot of the gangplank. The longshoremen, loading cargo through the forward and after ports or in slings down the yawning hatchways, had noticed men standing between-decks—apparently watching the operations—who suggested something more official than idly interested steerage or second-class passengers. And when two of the loaders attempted to climb down one of the hatches to assist in stowing cargo, they were stopped until the boss stevedore vouched for them both—afterward being checked off as they left the boat.

Later, as they left the wharf, one of the F. O. men remarked:

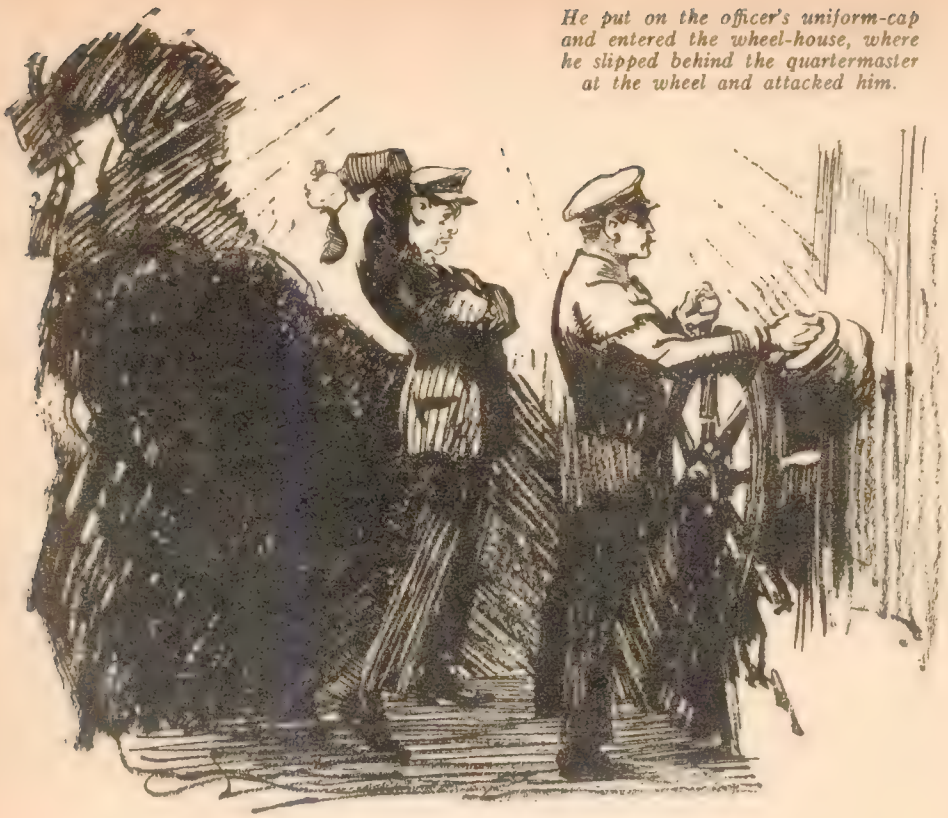
"That was about the most thorough combing of a steamer I ever saw! Fancy we may say that neither that particular bounder nor any of his lot are aboard the *Jaipur* this trip. What?"

"Hmph! . . . . When she's been lying a couple of days in the Hooghly, possibly we may congratulate ourselves. Until then—well, it's a bit premature. You see, I happen to know a bit about Tarnovitch. That scoundrel is as deadly as a cobra an' a dev'lish sight clev'rer! What price he'll not be aboard that boat at this moment? Eh? I'm takin' any sportin' wager on it!"

NOW here is a point which has a bearing on the mysterious man's proceedings and which he calculated upon in making his plans. When the ship casts off from the wharf or pier the passengers are leaning over the rail waving to friends they are leaving. Out of a hundred or more saloon-passengers, the stewards don't know one from another. So far, faces and personalities mean nothing to the officers except a table- or a stateroom-number—and frequently they don't for the entire voyage.

The mysterious passenger might have taken almost any vacant seat for dinner with impunity—there wasn't one chance in a thousand that anybody would question him as to his room or regular seat. But the man was taking no chances at all—yet. Along the gangways or in the smoking-room, none of the officers would have questioned him, because there was nothing to suggest his not being a duly certified passenger like any of the others. So, after leaning against the rail for half an hour, studying the face, build and manner of each man who passed him, he strolled into the smoking room—called for a sandwich and a bottle of ale, which he paid for in silver (passengers rarely sign room-checks the first night out), then lighted an excellent cigar and leaned back in his corner, studying the other men in the room as he had studied those tramping along the gangway. He was dressed like, and closely resembled, at least four or five other men of the same average, inconspicuous type on the saloon list. And his entirely unnoticed study of these other faces was the cold-blooded act of a ghoul without the slightest trace of humanity or kindly feeling—for he, was deciding, calmly and reflectively, which of those other decent likable men—whom he did not even know—was to pass out of this life within an hour or two.

SECOND of the two pawns in this game —the white pawn, let us call him, inasmuch as that which happened to him through no offense or volition of his own was on the opposite side of the board to that of Jamieson, the black pawn—was Willie Peddars—"William," to his employers—who was wearing with much innocent pleasure the tweed Norfolk-jacket suit, with cap of same material, which he had purchased for this, his first voyage. Around his neck was the gray silk tie knitted for him by his married sister, with its little tennis-bat stickpin. Willie had been saving up for three years for this vacation-trip. And to his sister's delight, his room-mate would be a Church of England curate—just the proper company, she considered, for a young fellow who had hitherto been nowhere outside of England. Willie's man-



He put on the officer's uniform-cap and entered the wheel-house, where he slipped behind the quartermaster at the wheel and attacked him.

ner was that of a friendly pup—he responded instantly to a pleasant word from other passengers.

In the smoking-room, he happened to be sitting opposite the inconspicuous man in one corner, who thus had excellent opportunity for studying him. Willie's pleasure was evident when a well-built, fine-looking man sauntered through the doorway and sat down beside him with a casual greeting. Willie had been noticing this genial man—whom everyone seemed to like at sight—from the moment they pulled out. The manner of this new acquaintance was that of one familiar with the sea nearly all his life. One of the ladies—traveling with a family of three—the gentleman had recognized as an old shipmate. They had been planking the lee gangway after dinner, and she had introduced him to others, but already he seemed to know half of those in the saloon. The unwitting pawn began to understand the reason for this as his new friend drifted easily into a discussion of tennis, the export-trade—in fact, practically everything with which he was familiar. He was not in the least aware that the gentleman, in occasional frank glances, was sizing him up a good deal more closely than he would have supposed possible—the net result being the fixing in his memory of a little white scar behind Willie Peddars' left ear, and a broken nail on the third finger of his right hand, where a new nail was pushing out the fragment of one blackened by a heavy blow. Those two little details were the only marks which really distinguished Willie from a dozen others.

When his companion went below, a man on the other side who had been listening admiringly to his talk moved closer to Peddars, rang for cocktails, and remarked:

"I hope to have a few good talks with Sir Edward before we make the Hooghly! Y'see, I'm in the shippin'-trade, and he's spent half his life on deep water—he's full-up with information upon everything connected with the steamship business."

"Sir Edward! D'ye mean the gentleman who was just talkin' with me?"

"Aye—of course! Sir Edward Coffin, Baronet. He worked his way up in the Brock Line—was Master on their boats for several years. His father died—leavin' him the title an' a pot of the oof. Has commercial int'rests in the city, I fancy—but travels about wherever he feels like goin'. Steward put him at the Captain's right—but the Old Man didn't come below for dinner, so they've not met."

"My word! I've been introduced to men with titles—at tournam'nts an' garden-parties, you know. Civil enough, but rather stiff in the back, I fancied. This gentleman, though, is a diff'rent sort altogether."

IT seemed to be Willie's evening. One of the lighter spots among its shadows was his thorough enjoyment of those few hours he had in his long-planned vacation. After Peddars had stood his round of drinks, the other man drifted out. Presently the unnoticed man in the corner came across for a match from the box on Willie's table. He lighted his pipe and drifted into a pleasant chat about life at sea, particularly going through the tropics. He mentioned the boat deck with the awning stretched over it so that passengers could sleep up there in deck-chairs on hot nights—said it was supposed to be taboo for passengers until they struck the Red Sea, but that he had found the door of the after-companion open that afternoon and had gone up for a look-see. "Take you up," he offered, "if you'd like to imagine what it would be like in hot weather. What?"

"Why—I don't know as I'd care to do anything against the rules, you know—might get ourselves in trouble, I fancy."

"Nons'nse, man—nons'nse! You can say you saw no sign against goin' up. The rain's turned into a drippin' mist—so nobody'll see us, anyhow. None of the officers are aft of the bridge. Come on!"

If the pawn hadn't moved, it certainly would have forced a reconstruction of the other man's plans—for it was absolutely necessary that *he* should be Willie Peddars during the voyage. Otherwise the man was merely a stowaway, subject to instant arrest the moment it was discovered he had no ticket or stateroom. But Peddars, actuated by idle curiosity, went up unsuspectingly to the boat deck with him.

At the top of the companion, Willie was suddenly laid out by a stunning blow from a solid rubber ball in the toe of a sock, hauled behind the stern of Number Eight boat—stripped to his underwear while still unconscious—felt over for any money-belt he might have had around his waist—then dressed in the suit his assailant had worn and brutally heaved overboard in the drizzling murk, into the tumbling waters of the English Channel. The murderer quickly dressed himself in Peddars' clothes. Then he crawled in under the boat cover, took from the suitcase a shaving-brush, cream and razor, and shaved the short mustache from his upper lip. He washed his face with water drawn from the boat's emergency keg, then packed the suitcase again, crawled out, and flung it overboard.

Calmly going below to the smoking-room—where five poker-players were the only persons remaining—the masquerader called for two sandwiches with a bottle of ale. While the steward was fetching these, the man took Willie's new traveling-wallet from the inside waistcoat pocket where the poor young fellow had so carefully pinned it—glanced over the passport and steamer-ticket in their celluloid envelope—also the cabin-plan of the steamer which had been given to Peddars with his stateroom checked upon it. Returning the wallet to its inside pocket, the rascal munched his sandwiches, drank his ale, and watched the poker-game with casual interest.

As he went below before the game ended, he glanced at the table-seat in the saloon which Peddars had carefully described, under the impression that they might have been seated near each other; then went straight down the port gangway to Room 42, which he quietly entered, and commenced to undress. The room-steward had laid out Willie's new pajamas on the lower berth. Above, the Curate was snoring peacefully, as the supposedly certified and passported young city clerk, on his vacation-trip, went quietly to sleep. *The second pawn had been moved.*

In the morning the Curate, wakening early with a qualmish sensation, went out on deck a good two hours before breakfast time. The room-steward was not yet due. So, with a couple of hours for investigation, the vacationist pulled Willie's trunk out from under the berth and familiarized himself with all of its contents, even to photographs of Willie's sister, taken with him. There was enough material to reconstruct Willie's personality and the subjects most likely to be in his mind. Shoving it back under the berth, Tarnovitch then studied the excellent photograph of Peddars—comparing it with his own face in the mirror over the basin. The resemblance was even closer than he had realized—he had selected probably the one man on the boat who was so like him, with the mustache gone, that the substitution of one for the other would pass without question. He had carefully memorized the clerk's responsive smile and several of his little mannerisms, and there wasn't a shadow of risk in

his entering the dining-saloon at breakfast-time and taking the table-seat which had been assigned on the previous evening to Peddars. The only other passengers in evidence that morning greeted him with smiles. Tarnovitch inferred that the clerk must have talked with them at dinner the night before—and drifted into a pleasant chat. When Sir Edward Coffin took his seat at the Captain's right, the supposed Peddars waved a greeting of recognition to him across the saloon—which was courteously acknowledged.

The usurper then began casting occasional glances over the faces at other tables in mental speculation as to which of them possibly could be His Highness the Maharajah of Matiala. This man was relentless, tireless, unscrupulous; he usually arrived at results by processes of elimination. There could be one person on board—and one only—who by any chance could be the Maharajah, no matter how unlike such a personage he might appear. Sooner or later he would be discovered, and then—some other man would succeed to the title and the *musnud!*

CAPTAIN HAYNES, knowing that the passenger on his right must be Sir Edward Coffin, greeted him civilly when he came below for breakfast, but with a certain amount of reserve. He frequently had rich peers and baronets on his saloon list—occasionally, ones said to have passed some years in the Merchant Marine but giving an impression from their knowledge of common ship-details that theirs scarcely could have been any official capacity. It was not many minutes, however, before he recalled the "Captain Coffin" who had had so many noteworthy experiences when commanding some of the Brock Liners. At once he became much more cordial, and when Sir Edward requested a confidential talk in the privacy of the Master's cabin, he was asked to come up there as soon as Haynes had made his morning inspection. At five bells, they were smoking comfortably together.

Presently Coffin handed the Captain a letter from his owners requesting for the Baronet the privilege of going anywhere he pleased on the boat—using the radio, as a licensed operator—and instructing Haynes to coöperate with him in every way.

"Whew! Those are what I call pretty wide-open instructions, Sir Edward! They don't say in so many words that I'm to hand over command of my boat to you—but they might as well have done so!"

"Needn't imagine anything of that sort from a fellow shipmaster, Captain! I'll just try to give you some impression of the situation we may have on your boat if certain suspicions should prove to have some foundation. Ever hear of the Maharajah of Matiala?"

"Hmph! . . . . *Rather!* I've been told in confidence that he's one of the most influential men in all India. Educated at Cambridge—highly enlightened Prince—not at all in favor of the nationalistic movement when it gets going against the British Raj. Conservative and level-headed."

"Well—just recently he's gone through Russia disguised as an Italian agent getting Government contracts for airplane motors, and has picked up vital information as to Russian intentions regarding India—data which will offset Russian propaganda of the last three years if only he can get home with it and spread it about among the influential native leaders. He's supposed by the F. O. to be aboard this boat, now—under an assumed name and with a still different personality. Get that?"

"My word!"

"And that's only the half of it! Ever hear of a Muscovite known as Tarnovitch?"

"Aye. Had him aboard once, in the China Sea—bound Hongkong way. We had a Mandarin aboard—a chap who'd been down on all communists an' the soviet idea in the Kwang Tung Province—fightin' 'em tooth an' nail. His room was opposite the one this Tarnovitch had, across the little passage from the gangway. One morning the Mandarin was found with his throat cut. Tarnovitch had simply melted out of sight—in the middle of the China Sea, mind you! No trace of him was found—supposed to have been knifed by two of the Mandarin's men—traveling second class—and chucked overboard. That was the last I heard of him until a month ago. Seems he wasn't killed—but is still doin'-in other chaps for one political reason or another. Oh—I say! Was that the reason behind their searchin' me so thoroughly yesterday afternoon at Southampton?"

"Precisely! He spotted the Maharajah in Moscow and Berlin—traced him to Paris and London. If he'd managed to get aboard of you, there isn't much question as to what would happen, sooner or later, on this voyage."

"The devil! . . . . I'll say not! Phew!

Makes a chap perspire to think of it! Fortunately—we know he's not aboard!"

"Are you so dead sure of that? Frankly, Haynes, I'm not—that scoundrel is one of the most fiendishly clever devils at large! And there is another point for you to chew over—you're carrying four and a half millions in gold, down in the strong-room."

"The deuce! Where did you get any such idea as that?"

"Saw it come aboard last night from the armored lorries which fetched it to Southampton. We don't know where Tarnovitch is at this moment—or whether there was even a possibility that he got wind of the gold. But suppose he did? Do you fancy that Tarnovitch would pass up anything like that when he had another job that would fetch him aboard of you?"

"But how the deuce could one bounder like that—no matter what he might have in mind—carry through a scheme to get a gold-shipment away from the officers and crew of a ten-thousand-ton liner?"

"You don't know that it is a case of one man alone! Could there be fifteen or twenty of his unscrupulous pirates booked on your boat among a hundred and fifty second-class or steerage passengers — or half a dozen or so of his expert accomplices among your hundred-odd highly respectable saloon-passengers—or not?"

"Considering the way this boat was combed yesterday by those Governm'nt officers, I'd say 'no' to both questions. Those Secret Service men would be certain to spot as many possible accomplices as that because they're familiar with such a demnition lot of 'em in the underworld of Europe. I can't see how it could have been possible for Tarnovitch alone to get aboard —but you may depend upon it, none of his accomplices are here with him. What other scheme might occur to him in the way of looting the gold, I don't know—we'd best keep a weather-eye out for anything. By-the-by, Sir Edward—would you mind tellin' me how you come to be interested in this matter of the Maharajah? I'd heard that you came into an independent fortune, an' left the sea for good."

"I anticipated that question—naturally. It must be understood, Captain, that we are speaking in the strictest of confidence—for reasons which you can readily see. Your boat and cargo are insured for just about the maximum which the underwriters care to risk. The Maharajah's life has been underwritten for one hundred thousand pounds. Your gold is fully insured as usual. All of which would be a matter of concern to the Lloyd's Directorate if a total loss were marked up against all three. You've doubtless met Mr. Philip Fernshaw and suspected his secret connection with Lloyd's—not? My position is a somewhat similar one. You might say I'm aboard you in the capacity of a well-meaning mascot—more than willing to assist in any way I can."

"By Jove! Who'd ever suspect anything of the sort with a man in your position? *H-m-m*—I'll be most appreciative concernin' any suggestions, Sir Edward."

"I knew you could be depended upon to size up the situation, Captain. Well, it looks to me as though our first job is to spot the Maharajah—and do it before anyone else aboard can! I've obtained from the Company's Manager and the Passport Bureau confidential data concerning some on the saloon list; the underwriters obtained from Scotland Yard quite a lot of information as to others. Altogether, out of the hundred and ten you have aboard, I think we may safely eliminate ninety. Suppose we check against 'em on the list. Eh?"

"Corking good plan, I'd say! Really, you know, I'd no hope that so many could be accounted for. But I suppose the Governm'nt has been quietly at work ever since His Highness selected this boat."

AFTER they had worked an hour, it apparently boiled down to one of five persons—three men and two women—upon whom nobody seemed to have had any previous data beyond what might be found in gazettes or biographical dictionaries.

One of the men was Major General Sir Ralph Follansbee—traveling with his daughter and her maid in an adjoining stateroom. Another was an Anglican missionary—going out to one of the hill-stations. The fifth was a South African diamond-broker with markedly Hebraic features. Captain Haynes rather favored the missionary—but Sir Edward demurred.

"No—there are little peculiarities about our missionaries that a Hindu might miss and give himself away—an aggressiveness which he'd not see in any of the Cambridge clerics. As for the diamond-broker, his nose might be faked by producing swellings, artificially, with a drug-hypo. He's a bit darker than the Maharajah—but that in itself would be a good disguise. My favorite, however, is General Follansbee. The daughter and maid are most unques-

Tarnovitch pulled something from his pocket and tried to throw it—but a bullet smashed the bomb in his hand.

tionably English—Sir Ralph apparently as much so. The combination is excellent. Presumably both women are from the F. O. —yet they might be simply friends of His Highness, glad to make a trip out East under exceptionally pleasant conditions."

"Hmph! That's an idea, Coffin! You may be right. Certainly, he's about the last person aboard who might be suspected."

"We'll assume for the moment it's either Follansbee or the diamond-broker — and study both of 'em during the day—also watch everybody trying to cultivate either man. Now—I'd like to get acquainted with Sparks and listen in for a while."

Medford, the chief radio-operator, had talked with Sir Edward over a good many miles of heaving ocean when he was Master of his own boat, and was much pleased to renew the acquaintance in person. When asked if there had been anything unusual in the air-gossip that morning, he said: "Nothing but an inquiry as to whether any of our passengers were missing. I told 'em I should have been notified if there had been. Then there was lot of interference in the Channel, and I lost 'em."

"Odd sort of inquiry! Who was talking?"

"Land's End. W/T."

"We're not more than a hundred and fifty miles from them, now—well within their range. Talking on six hundred, weren't they? Mind if I call 'em and ask for explanations? Thanks!"

Slipping the head-phones over his ears, Coffin got Land's End in a few moments. In response to his inquiry, they said:

> Man picked up in Channel by fishing-boat 2300 hours last night—30 miles S. Bolt Head. Wound on skull—occasionally delirious. Gave name William Peddars, Putney—claims was passenger on *Jaipur*—London, Colombo, Calcutta. Papers and cards in clothing bear name of Isidor Rothmann, Hamburg. Supposed case amnesia. Your previous message settles his claim.

Coffin flashed back the surprising answer:

> Confidential. Ask Peddars to repeat story to Managers this Line, in private. Say nothing to anyone else. Treat him with every consideration. All losses made good by Lloyd's. They furnish additional funds if he wishes continue trip next boat.
>
> COFFIN.

After signing off, Coffin picked up the nearest Lloyd's station with a thousand-mile range and sent two messages—one to Lloyd's and one to the Manager of the Line in London. Then he turned to Medford.

"Medford—in spite of all that careful search on this boat at Southampton, we've got that devil aboard—not a doubt of it! He attempted one murder last night—and we'll have more of 'em, I fear. Don't mention a word of this except to the Old Man, in strict confidence. You can tell him I've advised the Line, and Lloyd's. Keep your gun near your hand—your shades pulled over your windows, and your door locked. Don't let any one in except Haynes and your relief-operator. I'm serious, man!"

THE supposed Willie Peddars was confident that there had been no reason for any suspicion concerning him. With his predecessor being eaten by the sharks, as he figured, he could see no way in which suspicion could be directed his way. So he was very jovial when Sir Edward sat down at his left in the smoking-room and beckoned the steward for cocktails. The chat was a brief one, while the Baronet finished his pipe, and they parted with mutual assurances of further enjoyable acquaintance. But Coffin went directly up to the bridge and found Captain Haynes in his cabin.

"Cap'n, it's just as I feared—that devil is aboard! Did you notice that decent young clerk Peddars—out to enjoy every minute of his first voyage?"

"Why—aye; that'll be the chap our Manager spoke to me about. One of our Board has known his fam'ly many years. Spoke to him last evening in the gangway."

"Exactly! And at that time he had a small white scar back of his left ear—also a smashed fingernail on the third finger of his right hand—half grown out again. Well—at this moment, he has no such scar—and every fingernail is perfect!"

"Er—fancy I don't get it. . . . . What—"

"Willie was hauled out of the Channel off Bolt Head, last night—partly delirious—with some other man's clothes on him!"

"Then—my word! You fancy—Tarnovitch? Oh, rot—can't be possible! —You really mean it? Well—nothing to do but close in on the scoundrel! But on second thought, we really haven't sufficient evidence to iron him or interfere in any way until we have more direct proof. It's a serious matter to iron a saloon-passenger on no better excuse than a trumpery tale by a delirious man fished out of the Channel an' a couple of physical marks which you really can't be so positive about!"

"I made no mistake, Haynes! Spent the entire evening looking over the passengers and fixing 'em in my memory just for this reason. But I fancy I can guard the Maharajah fairly well—so don't be surprised at anything you may hear about him. Meanwhile, I've asked Lloyd's to have a destroyer ready at Gibraltar to follow us all the way to Colombo if necessary. She could run up and meet us in twenty hours if matters come to a crisis soon; but my impression is that Tarnovitch will lay low until we hit the Red Sea—that's his best bet for doing away with the Maharajah and tackling the gold proposition."

"But—dammit! . . . We don't know who else that brute may take it into his head to kill, meanwhile!"

"He wont risk discovery just to amuse himself—wont try any game except the one he started out with—which is all cut an' dried. He hasn't spotted Matiala yet—may not do it for a week or more. By the way, just hint quietly to Follansbee that I want a conference with him, and that he can trust me implicitly—will you?"

Coffin had been given the bridal suite at the forward end of the A-deck, under the bridge—a large room and bath which had outside bulkheads for two of its walls; the end of the drawing-room was on the other side of the third wall, and no other room opened upon the little passage by which it was reached. Incidentally, each of the windows had a steel shutter inside of it and the panes were of armor-glass to withstand the shock of heavy seas coming over the bows.

It was Coffin's idea to keep the Maharajah concealed there—and after they had sampled his Scotch, he said:

"General, I'm pretty well convinced that you're due to be murdered between here and Aden—if some guardian-angel doesn't watch out for you. And I thought of suggesting myself in that capacity. Eh?"

"H-m-m—why do you fancy Tarnovitch is on board?" the man known as Follansbee said calmly. "That was a very thorough search—what I saw of it!"

"He murdered—or thought he murdered—a young City clerk, just last night, and changed clothes with him in order to take his place as a passenger," Coffin replied gravely. "The clerk was picked up in the Channel. I know this man isn't he."

"Good work, old chap! . . . . You've beaten me on that end of it! But His Highness really isn't aboard, as far as I can tell. I'm Army Intelligence, d'ye see—makin' the voyage with my daughter on

the same suspicion you or your people must have had. The man listed as a diamond-broker is a Hindu, positively—but he's not Matiala; that I can swear from intimate personal knowledge!"

"Then you think you're in no immediate danger?"

"Not from any case of mistaken identity, at all events. Tarnovitch saw our man at close range in Moscow—prob'ly knows a few little tests he can make—at least, he knows the Hindu race well enough not to mistake a Caucasian for it. I've the impression that he may have confederates aboard. Only way to find out who they are is to be quite ready for ructions—then drift along a bit until they make a move."

ON the second night below Suez—with the weather thick—the diamond-broker whom Tarnovitch believed to be Matiala was knifed and thrown overboard. A silent figure passed up the ladder to the bridge, struck the second officer a terrific blow on the head, stuffed his nose with cotton soaked in chloroform—then put on his uniform-cap and entered the wheel-house, where he slipped up behind the quartermaster at the wheel and attacked him the same way.

Then the intruder unscrewed the binnacle-hood and with a wad of chewing-gum stuck a small bar-magnet on the inside curve of the brass hood, toward the helmsman, where it couldn't be seen. Replacing the hood, he then hailed the forward well for another quartermaster—saying, when the latter came up, that the other man had had a fit. The still form of the second mate lay in the darkness at the end of the bridge where it couldn't be seen.

When the other man had relieved the wheel, the supposed officer, in his rubber coat, went out, tossed the uniform-cap overboard, put on his own cap—and calmly went below to the smoking-room.

A few moments later something in the feel of the boat struck Sir Edward as peculiar. She was no longer taking the waves bow-on—instead they were throwing spray over her starboard rail.

Coffin ran up to Haynes' cabin.

"Take a look at the compass on your transom-desk, Cap'n!"

"I say! . . . . What the deuce! We're off our course—headin' due east! Come into the wheel-house with me!"

"Wait! This'll be a trick for the gold! Let 'em keep that course, but slow down to half-speed—and keep the lead going!"

Running aft to the radio-house, Coffin called the destroyer—with whose Commander he'd been talking in Navy Intelligence code all the way down the Mediterranean—and asked how close they were.

"Not over twenty knots astern, old chap," the destroyer's commander replied. "Some other craft between us this afternoon—looked like an old-type torpedo-boat—a four-inch Q/F rifle mounted for'ard."

"Come along up to us," Coffin directed. "Watch out for other craft. Will give you occasional signals."

Just after daybreak, the *Jaipur* found herself two miles off an uninhabited stretch of the Arabian coast, with but ten feet of water between her bottom and soft mud—her screws churning up muddy water astern as she reversed her engines and backed. Then the torpedo-boat fired a shell which missed rudder and screws by not more than twenty feet.

Before a second shot could be fired, however, a red streak blazed through the light haze farther out. A six-inch shell struck the bow of the torpedo-boat and completely demolished it. The survivors were picked up in the water—and put into irons.

Tarnovitch, chased along the port gangway by four officers, turned, pulled something from his pocket and tried to throw it—but a bullet from Sir Edward's automatic smashed the bomb in his hand. . . . .

A Mills bomb is extremely destructive when it explodes at close quarters; when the deck-stewards came along with mops and pails there were only bloody fragments of flesh, bones and cloth to be seen of the man.

AT Colombo it was learned that His Highness the Maharajah of Matiala had just reached Bombay safely, on one of the smaller British India boats.

In a radio conversation with Lloyd's, Sir Edward was told that the Government reward for Tarnovitch would be turned over to him—but he pointed out that the gold easily might have been looted and the boat a total loss by shellfire had it not been for the innocent bystander Willie Peddars—who had lost everything he had, in addition to enduring a rather frightful experience. Coffin made certain substitute suggestions, which were thoroughly approved. So the friendly little white pawn—who doesn't yet comprehend what the game was all about—eventually resumed his vacation-trip on another boat—with an expensive new kit, and a wallet containing a thousand pounds!

She put her arms around the girl and said: "There, there, Gertrude! I'm afraid this is too much for you."

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould

The Hatpin Murder

A specially attractive detective story by the gifted author of "The Murder at the Beach" and "The Perfect Hand."

By CHARLES F. LENT

THE weather was made to order for the Hatpin Murder. Lord, how it did rain that morning! I tried to duck out of our flat in Flatbush without my rubbers. Kitty caught me at it and made me come back and put them on. That delayed me some—not just putting on my rubbers, but saying good-by to Kitty all over again and all that. Yeah, we haven't been married very long. You know how it is. No, I'm not ashamed of it. I like it; and say, fella, if you ever have the good luck to draw some one like Kitty, you'll like it too.

Going to New York from the Flatbush section of Brooklyn by the subway without being trampled on is some job on a clear day. When it rains, and the folks who usually drive in or go by surface-car troop into the subway, it's all your life is worth to get there whole. I managed to push into the center door of a train at my station that morning, and endured having the breath about squeezed out of me until the train drew into the Bowling Green station. That's the first stop in Manhattan, where the subway emerges from the tunnel under the East River. Part of the mob that works in Wall Street and in the big export houses around Battery Park get out there, and the pressure eases a bit.

The doors opened and I was swept out on the platform by the surging crowd. Bowling Green was not my station; I had not the slightest desire to get out there; but the crowd began to move and out I went.

I'd stepped aside, waiting for a chance to get back on the train, when I noticed a commotion just a short way ahead. A young fellow had fallen to the platform. He lay face down, and the crowd in its hurry walked over and around him in its mad rush to get out. My impulse was to go to his assistance, but I saw three or four men stop to help him, and as the train was about to start, I stepped back just as the doors slid shut. I was no sooner back than I was sorry; if I could, I'd have got out again. I had a feeling, a queer sort of feeling, more than a hunch, that I was overlooking a bet.

You see, I'm a reporter on the New York *Star*. I just knew that here was news. I glued my eyes to the glass of the door I was standing by and took a good look as the train moved by the point on the platform where the young fellow lay. He lay there still, and one look told me there was something seriously wrong. A man who had been leaning over him was just straightening up as I came opposite—and though I couldn't hear him because of the noise the train was making, I could see his lips form the words: "*My God!*"

THREE minutes later the train I was on stopped at Wall Street. I tore out of there as if the devil was after me, ran down the stairs that lead to the tunnel, up the stairs on the other side and into a train that was just pulling out. The three minutes to the Bowling Green station were like hours to me. The moment the doors opened, I was out and running down the platform to where a cluster of men stood beside the young fellow, who still lay there making no effort to rise. A policeman beat me to it by a head. He shoved us all back, made a brief examination, then yelled for somebody to call an ambulance.

I asked the policeman if the guy was drunk. He shook his head and said out of the corner of his mouth:

"My guess is heart disease."

"You think he's dead?" I gasped.

"Dead as a door-nail is my guess, but I'm no doctor. Wait and see if the ambulance doc doesn't say I'm right."

In a few minutes a doctor, with a wet rain-coat over his white clothes, hurried down the platform, followed by two men with a stretcher. It didn't take the ambulance doctor long. He rose to his feet in a few moments and pronounced the man dead. His manner showed that he washed his hands of the affair. I found out afterward that if the man had had a spark of life in him, it would have been up to the doc; but ambulances are for live people. The young fellow was dead; so it was up to the police.

They used the stretcher to carry him up the stairs and out of the subway. With hundreds of people arriving from both directions every few minutes, they had to get the body off the platform quickly. I had my first good look when they lifted it into the stretcher. Gee, he was just a young fellow, about my age, twenty-two or -three.

I had a sick feeling as I wondered if he was married. It would be tough if he had left a wife as I had in Brooklyn half an hour before. Kissed her, you know—promised to get home as early as he could, not to get his feet wet and to eat a proper lunch, turned at the corner to wave to her because he knew that she'd be looking out of the front window. . . . .

That's the worst of having an imagination, I told myself as I followed the body they were carrying feet first along the platform. The guy would probably turn out to be an orphan and a confirmed bachelor!

The police waited for the patrol wagon; I waited with them. It was still pouring, and the few curious people who lingered soon got discouraged and hurried off. The stretcher was put down under what shelter the subway entrance afforded. The end of the stretcher—and his feet—were out in the rain; it worried me that his feet were getting wet. Poor guy, he was dead, past having wet feet hurt him any, but I peeled off my rain-coat and covered that end of the stretcher with it.

The patrol wagon came. I retrieved my rain-coat and looked around for a taxi to follow to the police station. I might have known better. You can get a taxi in New York any time you don't need one. Just try and get one when it rains, though! When I told the cops I was on the New York *Star*, and that I had seen the fellow fall on the platform, they invited me to ride to the police station with them, inside with the corpse. I've had pleasanter rides.

AT the police station I waited around for the report of the medical examiner—for that and for some dope on who the young fellow was. I knew the police would go through his clothes and find letters or cards or something to tell who he was—had been, would be more accurate, I guess. I got the dope on his name first; from the things in his wallet his name seemed to have been Edward Rich, a salesman for the Euseka Company, with offices on Lexington Avenue. I got tired of waiting and was just about to leave when a cop came hurrying up to the desk, his eyes popping.

"Lieutenant," he gasped, "the doc says the man didn't fall dead. He was murdered."

The lieutenant looked at the cop, bewildered. "But the ambulance doc said it was heart disease."

"No, he didn't," I spoke up. "He only said the man was dead. He didn't say what

"Dead as a door-nail is my guess. See if the ambulance doc doesn't say I'm right."

of—it was the folks who stood around who said it was heart disease."

That cop didn't know any more than that the man was murdered. I waited and saw the medical examiner. The young fellow had been stabbed through the heart with a hatpin. It had been driven into his body up to the head, which had been broken off.

YOU can believe that I dashed out of there with my coat-tails flying. It was unbelievable luck that I was the only reporter on the spot. I dashed into the nearest telephone-booth, got the office on the wire and told them all I knew to date, which was that Edward Rich, a salesman for the Euseka Company, had been stabbed to death with a hatpin on a crowded subway train on the way from Brooklyn, and his body had fallen out on the platform when the doors opened at Bowling Green.

The *Star* beat the town on that by a good half-hour. You see, I was the first reporter on the spot. I was told to drop anything else I was doing and to stay on the case.

If you remember the Underwood murder out in Westchester County a few months ago, and what it did for me, you will understand why I was excited.

When Rita Underwood was murdered at Rye Beach, I was just the Westchester County reporter for the New York *Star* simply aching for a raise, and promotion to New York, where the big news breaks. I was also a bachelor. Solving that murder, with Kitty's help, brought me a raise, promotion—and a wife.

Here was another murder. I had the jump on the fellows on the other papers; if I could make good on this, I'd feel secure on the *Star*. They'd made it plain that they thought me pretty young, and I was on probation.

I gritted my teeth and made up my mind I wouldn't fall down. It would be no cinch. Millions ride in the subway every day, and it would be some job to find the one out of the millions who'd done this. I jumped into the subway headed uptown. My starting-point was the office where he had worked—good idea to inquire there.

On the way up to Grand Central, I eyed the other passengers in the car suspiciously. No telling, one of them might be a murderer. Then I jumped—hardly a murderer; *murderess* was nearer it. What man would have a hatpin to use? As the French say: "Search for the woman." Wise birds! I must look for a woman with a big grudge. Then I thought of the dead man's face. A nice face, innocent and frank and all that.

I shook myself impatiently. When would

I learn to be hard-boiled the way the rest of the fellows on the *Star* were? Most of them would believe anything of anybody. I mustn't get any notions into my head or let sympathy for the dead boy influence me. He didn't look like that sort of a guy—a woman-chaser; but you never could tell. He was dead, murdered with a hatpin, and that was a woman's weapon if there ever was one. In spite of his innocent looks, some dame had it in for him. He must have given her provocation; and he'd paid with his life. . . . . I shook my head and spoke out loud:

"That's all so, but just the same, I don't believe it." I said it emphatically and quite loudly. A middle-aged woman beside me turned and said: "I beg your pardon?"

"I beg yours," I said, coloring hotly.

I WAS right about that number on Lexington Avenue. It was one of those buildings in the Grand Central zone that had been the highest building in the world for a time—a short time. Two that are higher were finished within six months after this one was opened. If it wasn't the highest building any longer, it sure must still be the showiest; it looked on the ground floor like a cross between a palace and a cathedral. This Euseka outfit were on the twenty-third floor, I found out. Up I went in an express elevator.

The Euseka offices were opposite the elevators. I walked in and gave a quick look around. Class, my boy, nothing but class to that place; some swell dump, I'm telling you! I thought there was no one in the outer office at first; then I saw the girl at the information desk had her head down on her arms on the table in front of her, and that she was crying. I waited, then coughed. She looked up, a frightened, tear-stained face, with two eyes brimming.

"You know about Mr. Rich, then?" I asked softly.

She nodded.

"The police telephoned. Mr. Price has gone down there. He thinks there must be some mistake."

"I'm afraid it's so."

"Oh, isn't it terrible!"—and she was off again. Hysterics, you know.

She made an awful row; but for all of that, nobody else appeared for a moment, and I was wondering what I should do. When Kitty gets that way, which isn't often, I take her in my arms and pat her and kiss her and calm her down. I couldn't do anything like that with this dame, and I was wondering what I could do under the circumstances. Throw cold water on them, I'd heard was good, but her dress looked as if it would spot; she might not thank me for it when she got over the attack.

A prim, middle-aged woman came hurrying out of one of the private offices, put her arms around the girl and said:

"There, there, Gertrude! I'm afraid this is too much for you."

At that, the girl put her head down and bawled louder than ever. Not so good, I thought; perhaps the cold water would be best. But continued pattings, and murmurings of, *"There, there!"* did finally have some effect.

Gertrude sat up. She still sobbed, but the worst was over. I waited.

"There, there, dear! You'd better go to the rest-room, wash your face and take some aromatic spirits. You must try and pull yourself together. I'll stay here till you come back. If you aren't better, you must go home."

Evidently the prim lady was the one who must be obeyed around there, for Gertrude went meekly off as she was told. Then this woman looked at me inquiringly.

"I'm a reporter. I saw the thing happen," I explained.

"Then it is really so? We hoped that there was some mistake. I can't realize it. Only last night he went out laughing as he started home. Such a nice boy."

"He looked nice," I mumbled.

"What was it—his heart?"

I looked at her in astonishment. I could feel my mouth fall open.

"His heart? Why, what do you mean? Don't you know?"

"Know? Of course I know. The police telephoned the office saying that Mr. Rich had died in the subway. We assumed it was his heart."

"So it was, but he was—"

I couldn't go on. She looked like such a nice woman—refined and all that.

Very slowly she rose from her seat at the information desk. Her eyes were frightened as she looked steadily into mine.

I tried to look away, but she held mine.

"Tell me, young man, what are you holding back?"

"Why, it wasn't an attack of heart disease. He was hurt—by somebody. He must have died instantly."

"You mean he was murdered?" she gasped incredulously.

I just nodded my head, then added: "He was stabbed."

She fell back into her chair.

"Oh, the poor boy, the poor boy!" she exclaimed. Then she sprang up and faced me indignantly.

"It can't be so. There is some mistake. Why, he hadn't an enemy in the world!"

AND for all the prying of the police and the running around of reporters, that's the way it looked. Check up on him as we could, no one found the least out about his life. He lived in Brooklyn, only a few blocks from me. He was engaged to a girl in his home town upstate, and in Brooklyn he was a Y. M. C. A. and correspondence-course sort of young man. No bad habits. Keen to get on in the world, and steady as a clock. I went home that night discouraged. If there was only something to take hold of—some little thing out of the way in the boy's life, to give me a lead!

I told Kitty about it when I got home that night; I had to, for she saw right away that I was bothered. She was sure that I would do over again what we had done in the Underwood case. I wasn't so sure.

I pointed out to Kitty that the subway trains run on about a four-minute headway during the rush hour, that every train during that time is crowded. At a conservative estimate, five hundred people leave the trains, the uptown and downtown ones, at that station every five minutes during the rush hour. Suppose that the murderess had killed Rich after the train had left the Borough Hall station in Brooklyn; all she had to do was to support the body for the few minutes it took the train to reach Bowling Green. Not very difficult, with the other passengers pushing against him so hard. When the doors opened, all she had to do was to walk out, lose herself in the crowd and in five minutes be up on the street and blocks away before anybody found out that Rich was dead.

Kitty wanted to know why somebody wouldn't remember standing beside the girl and the man; she was sure that some one must have noticed them.

"It doesn't follow, sweetheart. I couldn't tell you for the life of me who stood next to me on the way in this morning. Some one with sharp elbows—but I've no idea what they looked like. You've no idea what a rush-hour crowd is."

Kitty had to admit that it wasn't going to be easy. But she looked at me proudly and said that I'd do it somehow, she just knew that I would. . . . .

I wrote a story of the murder, a sort of story. It wasn't a bad descriptive piece of writing, but it was a little shy on facts. The boy apparently had not an enemy in the world. He was studious, hard-working, ambitious. His reward should have been the presidency of the Euseka Company in twenty years or so; instead he had a hatpin through his heart.

The next few days were hard. I attended the inquest. I haunted the district attorney's office and the police station. I chased here and there on leads of my own. The district attorney's office, the police, the newspapers were all stalling. No one had the faintest idea who had done it or why. If we had an inkling of the *why*, we might have had an idea of the *who*. But dig into the boy's past as we could and did, we couldn't turn up a thing. No bad habits, no entanglements with doubtful people; a nice decent fellow making good in the big town and without an enemy.

Some of the older men in the *Star* office began to kid me when three days passed without my being able to turn in anything new on the case. One of them wrote a fake head-line and left it on my desk—"BOY WONDER FALLS DOWN"—meaning me. Some of them in the office thought I'd been overpraised for my part in the Underwood case. I tore up the paper and threw it into the waste-basket but I had to admit that I had fallen down. The only bit of cheer for me in it all was that the eighteen thousand cops in New York had fallen down too.

Rich's funeral was to take place in the little town upstate where he came from. The *Star* told me to go, wanted me to get the local slant on the affair. I took the Berkshire Express from Grand Central that morning. The body was on that train, the family, that part of it that had been in New York helping the police, the people from his office and other reporters, of course. In spite of all Kitty had said and done trying to cheer me up, I was feeling discouraged. The day didn't help any; it was raining again, not a downpour like the day of the murder, but a steady drizzle. It was October and the country out of the car window looked dismal. The little town upstate looked dismal too, when we struck it after a gloomy three-hour ride. They took the boy's body to his folks' house, a big comfortable-looking place on the main street. The rest of us went to the hotel.

The funeral was from the church at two o'clock. That gave me time to drift around town and buzz a lot of people. The town was crowded with folks from way out in the country. His folks were important people here; the boy had been popular; his sensational death had stirred up the whole countryside, and people just came flocking in for the funeral. I heard a lot of talk, but none of it helped any. I was late reaching the white church in the center of the town, so late that it looked for a minute that I wouldn't get a seat, the place was so crowded. They saw I was a stranger and put me in the same pew with the folks from the boy's office. I recognized Mr. Price and the prim lady whom I knew by then as Miss Merritt; the three men with them I did not know. I found out afterward that one was Mr. Long, a salesman from the New York office, and the other two men officials from the factory in Connecticut.

IT was during the long prayer that I noticed it. I suppose I should have kept my head bowed and my eyes shut or at least downcast, but the prayer was long and harrowing—the minister telling God all about it: how fine the boy had been, the bereaved family's grief, how sad it all was—as if God didn't know it. It got me nervous. I simply couldn't look at the flower-banked casket with that poor kid inside, so I turned my head sideways and looked at the people, and tried to think of other things. I could see the boy's mother and the local girl he had been engaged to, two pitiful figures in black trying to comfort each other.

I couldn't stand that, so I turned my head the other way. All I could see was Miss Merritt's bowed head, the prim lady in the boy's office. I must have been staring at it for some time before it registered; then I caught my breath and gripped the back of the pew in front of me. Miss Merritt's head was devoutly bowed; her eyes were closed, and tears trickled down her cheeks. But that was not what I was staring at so hard. No sir, it was the hatpin that held her hat to her head. I'd thought women had stopped wearing them, what with bobbed hair and close-fitting hats—but Miss Merritt hadn't. It gave me a queer feeling. My mind raced along.

In the days that had passed since the murder, not one thing had turned up that helped me one little bit. Now, here was a hatpin in the possession of a person close to the murdered man, and the murder had been done with one. I was so lost in speculation that I forgot to listen to the prayer and neglected to raise my head when it ended. Mr. Price had to nudge me. I straightened up in a hurry then, feeling foolish and yet elated. I just knew I had a starting-point at last.

A dozen questions ran through my mind. Where was Miss Merritt when it happened? I hadn't checked up on her movements or those of anyone else in that office. For all she looked so prim and precise and pious, might she not have been in love with the boy? Stranger things have happened than for a woman her age to fall in love with a boy young enough to be her son.

THE rest of that funeral service is a blank to this day. I wrote a story of it for the *Star*, a darned pathetic story, regular sob-sister stuff. I must have got the facts with my subconscious mind, for all the mind I had was working on the problem of Miss Merritt and her hatpin.

On the trip home by a local train that made every stop, I sat by myself in the smoker, refusing to play cards with the other newspaper boys and did not join in their complaints about our rate of speed. I wanted to think. Because I closed my eyes, the others thought I was asleep. I wanted to think, and I did not want to talk. I wondered if the other fellows had seen what I had seen. The little I had seen of Miss Merritt, I had liked, and was sorry to think that she was mixed up in this mess. But there was no one else. I couldn't forget that hatpin in church. It had looked as evil to me as a snake. No wonder the police were all at sea. She was the last person anybody would suspect. The first thing I did next morning would be to check up on where she had been at the time of the murder.

When we reached Grand Central, I walked over to Miss Merritt and offered to escort her home. She thanked me nicely, said it was not necessary—she was accustomed to going around by herself. I found myself staring at the hatpin. There it was in plain sight. It looked sinister and deadly to me. She sensed my staring, and reached up her hands and straightened her hat. I could have kicked myself, putting her on her guard that way. I felt like a chump. I got away abruptly, but not before I looked straight into her eyes as I said good night.

I turned away more disgusted than ever. What was the matter with me? I was mak-

I was staring at the hatpin that held her hat to her head. I'd thought women had stopped wearing them.

ing a plaster saint out of the boy who'd been killed, and refused to believe the evidence of my own eyes when it came to this woman. But I simply could not make myself believe that those were the eyes of a murderess. I argued the pros and cons all the way home to Flatbush that night. Kitty saw I was bothered. She didn't ask any questions, but promptly got me something to eat and sat beside me holding my hand while I ate. Sure, I'm the champion one-handed eater of Flatbush. After supper I told Kitty all about it. She'd never seen Miss Merritt, and was ready to believe anything about her.

"Women who do not marry," said this wise little matron of slightly over one month, "often get queer ideas. My mother has an aunt—not a real aunt, darling, no real kin of ours, so I couldn't have inherited it. How they keep that woman out of the foolish house, I don't know. Every time she comes to New York shopping, she's insulted. A man tried to flirt with her, she says when she gets home. Sometimes it's not one man but several. It's a disease; she can't help it, poor thing."

WITH Kitty agreeing, I went to bed that night almost persuaded that I was keen on the scent of something. A little sleuthing next morning, and my fine theory was knocked higher than a kite. At the time of the murder, Mr. Price, Miss Merritt and Gertrude were all in the office. They were there that morning a half-hour earlier than usual, Mr. Price said—that is, it was early for him and for Miss Merritt. Gertrude got there every morning at eight-thirty. He was a little evasive as to the reason for his early-morning conference with Miss Merritt. It had been a conference, he said.

Right there I had the solution at my finger-tips, but like a bonehead I hadn't sense enough to know it. I've a single-track mind, I guess, for I saw no significance in what Mr. Price said. Long was the only other member of the office force I hadn't checked up on. There was a bookkeeper named Miller who lived in Jersey. He was marooned that morning in a train on the Hackensack Meadows by a wash-out on the railroad by which he commuted. The police had investigated that days ago and found that it was the straight goods.

The elevator-man at the apartment where Long lived told me that Long had left early that morning, been splashed by a passing taxi and returned and changed his clothes. At the time of the murder he was in his apartment changing his clothes a good five miles from Bowling Green.

I went home that night discouraged. I saw no prospect of making good on this case. I'm no policeman; I'm a reporter. It wasn't my job to catch the guilty one; but the worst of it was the *Star* expected me to repeat, solve this murder as I had the other one. Kitty saw that I was low in my mind. She didn't say much, but did her best to cheer me up. I had an awful fit of the blues, and she didn't accomplish much. We went to bed and after a lot of tossing and tumbling I must have dozed off. Kitty woke me up in great excitement. I sat up in bed and rubbed my eyes. She had turned on the reading light by the bed—and how pretty she looked with her cheeks pink from excitement and her hair tumbling about her shoulders!

Having had some experience with Kitty's ideas, you can be sure I listened to this one respectfully. Before she was married, Kitty worked for a big Wall Street house. She was at the telephone and information desk. Her idea was to get Gertrude's job in the Euseka office and be where she could watch Miss Merritt and be hep to anything else that went on there with a bearing on the murder. I jumped at the idea. Gosh, but it would be fine and dandy to have Kitty's help again on a case.

Satisfied, Kitty cuddled down and went to sleep again like a baby. I was wide awake as a hawk. I wondered how I could manage to get Kitty in that office. I thought again of that hatpin of Miss Merritt's; you couldn't get away from the fact it was identical, so far as I could see, with the one in the district attorney's office with which the murder had been committed.

That suggested something else to me: the assistant district attorney in charge of this case was a chap named Gordon, a nice fellow, just appointed, anxious to make good. His job, like mine, depended on his finding out who murdered young Rich. This Gordon fellow was the one for me to see about Kitty, I decided. Most of the district attorney's staff were older men, polite enough to us reporters, because it was policy for them to be, but behind their politeness you knew that they looked on reporters as nuisances that mustn't be antagonized. This fellow Gordon was different.

SAY, it was easy: Gordon sent for Mr. Price, told him he wanted to put one of his trusted operatives in the office, suggested that a phone-call might give us a hint. Mr. Price was willing, and sent Gertrude away on a two-weeks' vacation. Kitty took her place. Not even Mr. Price knew that Kitty was my wife.

I could hardly wait to get home to Flatbush the evening of Kitty's first day in that office. She was home when I reached there. I asked her how she liked it.

"Fine. It seems like old times."

"Learn anything?"

"Only that you are all wrong about Miss Merritt. Why, she's a perfect dear."

Isn't that like a woman? I'd laid off Miss Merritt as a suspect ever since I'd found out she had an alibi.

Kitty went on:

"She's a dear, but she could double easily for Queen Mary. No one but the dear Queen and Miss Merritt would be found dead wearing such hats. It takes her ten minutes before the mirror to put on her hat when she goes to lunch. Mine, I just pull it on, and hardly ever look in a mirror. She keeps a reserve supply of hatpins in her desk."

"She does?"

"Yes; she says she buys them by the half-dozen, for she is always losing them."

"Is her desk locked?" I demanded sharply.

"Why, I don't know. I don't think so."

"Then anybody could grab one out of her desk to use?"

Kitty caught the significance of that.

"I don't see why not. If anybody knew they were there and wanted one, all they would have to do is to take it."

KITTY and I stared at each other; perhaps this was important. We talked over her day. She had nothing important to tell me. Mr. Price seemed a pleasant, kindly man. Miss Merritt was a perfect dear; the bookkeeper was negligible, and we knew he had an alibi; the other salesman named Long, Kitty did not like. She could give no reason. I asked if he had tried to get fresh with her; Kitty said he hadn't—he was just not the type that made a hit with her. Any suspicious telephone calls for him or for anybody else? No, ordinary business calls, all of them legitimate ones, so far as she could figure.

After dinner, we sat around, restless, uneasy. We both had a feeling that there was something we could and should do, but we couldn't imagine what. It must have been nine-thirty before Kitty got it:

"Why—I know what we ought to do! We ought to see if any of Miss Merritt's

reserve stock of hatpins is missing. She's such a methodical old dear, that if one is missing, she will know it; and if it is—"

"If there is, and I'll bet my last dollar there is, all we have to do is to find out who took it."

"Yes, that's all; and believe me, that will be plenty."

I couldn't wait till morning; I had Miss Merritt's home address, and we went there. She had not gone to bed, and we saw her. She was surprised to see us, astonished to find that Kitty was my wife, and to learn why she was in the office. And say, she had missed a hatpin, missed it the very morning of the murder. Gosh, how my heart thumped when she told us that!

She had a card of six in her desk, and now there were but five. She was positive that she had not used or lost it. No, her desk was never locked. There was a safe in the office, and a private letter-file of Mr. Price's that was locked. In it he kept copies of confidential letters to the home office, and things like that. I decided that we must not lose a minute. I called Gordon; fortunately he was still at the district attorney's office working on this case. Guardedly I told him I thought I had stumbled onto something, asked him to meet us in the Euseka office. He said that he would; and Miss Merritt, Kitty and I hurried down town. Gordon was waiting for us. Miss Merritt hurried to her desk, pulled open a drawer and showed us the card with five hatpins. She was about to pick it up, when Gordon stopped her.

"Don't touch it, please, Miss Merritt. I have an idea that we may find fingerprints on it."

I'd never have thought of that, but Gordon knew how important such things sometimes are. He telephoned to his office and had them send up a fingerprint expert. The

"You are holding something back! There was a quarrel, and it was about money, wasn't it?"

first thing the expert did was to take Miss Merritt's fingerprints. Poor woman, she cried and protested that it made her feel like a criminal, but Gordon insisted. Sure enough, there were fingerprints on the card. Miss Merritt's, of course, but others. Novice that I am, I could see the difference as I leaned over the card. It was a plain print, and it surely was not hers. Whose was it? How did it get there? That's what we had to find out.

Gordon and his expert were not feazed. They knew where to look for the fingerprints of the other people in the office. On Mr. Price's desk was a paper-weight; on Long's was a pipe, on the bookkeeper's an ink-eraser. The expert dusted them all with a powder of some kind and then photographed them.

You'd never believe that they could be so different. The bookkeeper's was the first he compared with the prints on the hatpin

card. Not at all, nothing alike. Mr. Price's wasn't, either, but the print of the salesman Long's was identical. We straightened up and looked at each other. Miss Merritt was trembling; I was excited, ready to start to write my story.

"Then, he's guilty!" I exclaimed triumphantly. I was ready to grab my hat and start for the *Star* office.

"Guilty of what?" Gordon inquired calmly.

I just stared at him. He went on:

"Guilty of rummaging in Miss Merritt's desk. There can be no doubt of that. Hardly an indictable offence, however. We have a long way to go to show any connection with the crime."

Cold common sense, of course, what Gordon said. Where were we after all? I felt cheated and stubbornly sure that we had discovered something important.

"But there must be some connection," I protested. "This isn't just a coincidence. Long took the hatpin. His fingerprints prove it. We have a suspect at last. Rich was killed with a hatpin. Do you mean to tell me there is no connection?"

"I mean to tell you nothing. All I said was that we had a long way to go." Turning to Miss Merritt, Gordon inquired:

"You said that Long and Rich were friendly, did you not?"

"I did; and they were friendly."

"You are sure? Even the best friends quarrel sometimes. No quarrel about a girl or about money just before this happened?"

"Money?" she asked, looking troubled.

I pounced on her. "You are holding something back. There was a quarrel, and it was about money, wasn't it?"

Miss Merritt looked frightened to death. She shrank away from me. She looked as if she was going to cry again. Kitty ran to her and spoke sharply to me.

"Don't—you only frighten her. She's not holding anything back. Wait a minute, and she will tell you."

Gordon interfered in his nice quiet way:

"You remember something that may have a bearing, don't you, Miss Merritt? Take your time and tell us about it."

"But it can't have any bearing. It's confidential. Mr. Price wouldn't like it if I told you."

Gordon was patient but firm. "It's your duty to tell us, Miss Merritt. Let me be the judge of the value of what you say. There is something, then?"

"Yes; that's what makes it so sad. Mr. Price is leaving, going to the main office as sales manager. Mr. Rich was to have taken his place here, but no one knew it, not even Mr. Rich. No one was to know it till Mr. Price was ready to go. I had to know it, for I am Mr. Price's confidential stenographer. I saw the letters about it, the ones locked up in Mr. Price's private file. You can see it has no bearing. When you said money, I happened to think that this meant an increased salary for Mr. Long. He will get the place, now, I suppose."

I had all I could do to keep from shouting, "Whoopee!" I was so sure that we were getting somewhere at last. I smiled at Kitty; she looked excited too. Here was a motive at last—business rivalry. And we had been looking for a woman all this time! Gordon said something that surprised me.

"I'd like to look at that correspondence, the letters in the locked file, if you please. Where is the key kept?"

"In my desk," Miss Merritt answered promptly.

"As accessible as the hatpins," was Gordon's comment.

WELL, they found Long's fingerprints as big as a house on those copies. That proved he knew as much as Miss Merritt did about the promotion that was coming to Rich and that wasn't coming to him. Even that, Gordon pointed out, wasn't a valid reason for murder. Long might be disappointed, no doubt was, but unless he was plumb looney, he wouldn't go out and kill his business rival. Gordon wasn't satisfied. With all we had found out, we were no nearer an arrest. He looked around the office and spied the safe.

"Anything of value kept in there?" he asked Miss Merritt.

She bridled indignantly.

"Certainly, our office records. They are very important."

"Who knows the combination?" Gordon wanted to know.

"No one but Mr. Price and myself."

"Then there is nothing in there but office records—ledgers—no money?"

"Petty cash for office expenses. No very great amount."

"None of it missing at any time?"

"Certainly not."

Gordon seemed disappointed. He looked around the office impatiently, a puzzled frown on his face.

"Haven't you enough on Long to do—something?" I inquired.

"To do what?" he snapped. "Long rummaged in Miss Merritt's desk. He read the letters in the locked file. The company can fire him—no doubt it will; but I have nothing on him—yet. If he had got away with money or securities, that would be different."

Miss Merritt said, "Oh!" and stood staring at Gordon. We all turned and looked at her. Say, she looked funny. She had cried when her fingerprints were taken, and still showed it. Her hat was askew; she looked foolish as she stood there staring at Gordon with her mouth open. We all looked at her, wondering if the strain had been too much for her. Gordon's fingerprint expert looked at me, tapped his forehead significantly, and winked. Then Miss Merritt said, "Oh!" again.

Kitty ran to her side.

"You remember something, don't you, dear? Something that will help us?"

MISS MERRITT nodded. "When you said *securities*, I remembered," she said. "There are some Liberty Bonds in the safe, about fifty thousand dollars' worth."

Gordon jumped and said: "Maybe! And the record of the combination, that is here somewhere, isn't it? Don't tell me you kept that in your desk too."

"No, it is in the private file."

"The private file that we have discovered is not so private after all. The first thing to do is to see if the bonds are still there. They are negotiable?"

"Yes, coupon bonds."

"Then open the safe for us and look."

Miss Merritt drew back, hesitated.

"I'm sure Mr. Price wouldn't like it. Can't we wait till he is here?"

"We can't wait a moment. It's all right, Miss Merritt. I'll take the responsibility."

Still protesting and reluctant, Miss Merritt opened the safe. She reached in and drew out a big envelope, opened it. We all craned our necks. Only insurance policies in that envelope. She put it back, drew out another and looked inside. She looked up at us in amazement and fright.

"They're gone!"

"I rather imagined they might be," Gordon said grimly. He handed the envelope to the fingerprint man.

"Get busy on that."

IT wont surprise you any to learn that Long's fingerprints were there. I wonder why that guy didn't wear gloves. Fourth-rate crooks, even, know enough to do that nowadays.

Once convinced of those last fingerprints, Gordon went into action. The police arrested Long that night. Next day's *Star* looked good to me. My story was signed. I was making good in New York. Of course Gordon's case was mighty weak at the time of the arrest. He had Long locked up, but he had mighty little evidence that a jury would give a whoop for. Gordon knew that, so he kept digging. He found out that Long was playing the stock-market. He located the bonds with a brokerage house. Funny thing, too; up to the day he was arrested, Long had been losing his shirt; then Wall Street went crazy. Five-million share days, everything going up. While Long was in the Tombs awaiting trial, he cleaned up a fortune. Yep, it was his too. He used it to hire the cleverest criminal lawyer to be had. The Euseka people got back their bonds eventually, but the profits stayed with Long, till his lawyers got them.

But listen, the *Star* and every other paper in New York published Long's picture, and witnesses rose out of the ground like those soldiers in the mythology I used to study. You know—Cadmus sowing the dragon's teeth, and soldiers springing up from where he sowed 'em. One man had seen Long nervously pacing the subway station platform in Flatbush while waiting for Rich. Two more had stood close enough to him as he went toward New York with Rich to hear part of their conversation. Two girls had seen him plunge past them into a taxi they had hailed, and drive away from the Bowling Green station.

It took two trials to send him to the chair; but that's where he went.

DURING the trials Kitty and I saw Miss Merritt often. Say, what do you suppose her firm did? They made her the new manager of the New York office. I had a dandy feature-story about that in the Sunday *Star* not long ago. Kitty's very, very fond of her, so much so that she vows if the baby is a girl, she will name it Alice after Miss Merritt. . . . . Not a chance—that kid is going to be a boy; and there is only one name for him—mine, with *Junior* added. And that kid with a mother as smart as Kitty, and with me to tip him off, wont work for a newspaper when he grows up the way his dad does; no sir—he'll own one.

The White Conqueror

By ALEXANDER SPRUNT

THE dozing seal suddenly jerked its head upright, and with startled gaze stared out over the rippling surface of the waters which lapped the ice-floe. The large, mild eyes glanced uneasily here and there, but nothing was visible except a circling gull, as white as the ice itself and as silent. For perhaps two minutes the seal watched intently, then, its quick alarm subsiding, dropped its head once more. Another minute fled, all was still and, but for the faint wash of the ripples at the edges of the ice, the scene was devoid of movement. The gull had now disappeared.

The seal, sleeping, never knew the lightning doom which smote it. From the steel-colored water a huge, glistening shape rose upward at the very edge of the floe, and rearing high, in an arching, silent spring, descended fairly upon the motionless form with a sodden, crashing impact. An armored paw, edged with clutching talons, crushed the sleeping animal's head against the ice. With a convulsive quiver, the tapering body stilled, the flippers moved feebly once, twice, and then sank softly downward.

Rising from the still form with a rumbling growl of satisfaction, the dripping conqueror stood erect. His narrow, wedge-shaped head held high, he sniffed sharply, then lowered it with a quick swaying motion, and began his meal. All the movements, appearance, and method of attack of the newcomer denoted rulership. The onslaught had shown cunning, power and experience; his ensuing behavior was sure and deliberate. Full nine feet in length, standing four and a half feet high at the shoulder, he was clothed in a heavy coat of fur, white from head to tail, slightly tinged with a hue of old ivory.

Alba was a polar bear who seemed to typify in a striking way, the very spirit of that vast Arctic country which he ruled. Strong, implacable, vested with a stern superiority, he took toll of his subjects in that land of ice and snow impartially and often, and there was none to say him nay, or dispute his monarchy.

After he had eaten what he wanted of the seal, Alba raised himself again, stood for a moment glancing over the strip of water in front, and, plunging in, made his way to the mainland. Clambering out upon the shingle, he shook himself vigorously and set off along the shore-line. Where a jumbled mass of boulders topped a rise on the tundra, he swung inland. Between two of the boulders, at the summit of the low eminence, was a crevice—not large, but dry and dim, and to this spot the white bear made his way. It could hardly be called a den, for Alba did not hibernate during the winter as did the female bears, electing rather to roam the snowy solitudes. The crevice, however, served him both as a resting-place and a look-out station, and to it he usually repaired when weary, or full-fed. Climbing the little slope, he gained the summit, but, not entering the dim recess, stretched himself in the sun upon the rocks. His full stomach made him drowsy, and dropping his head between his paws, he slept.

WAKING about an hour later, he stretched hugely and yawned. Just as he was about to descend the rocks, he stopped short, whirled, and listened intently. A sound had broken the stillness.

An unfamiliar sound it was, one which he could not account for, and after a full two minutes of rock-like immobility, he turned about, slipped over the boulders, and gaining the tundra, glided noiselessly across an intervening clear expanse, and wormed his way through some low-growing vegetation in the direction of the disturbance. A little hill, clothed on top with grasses, loomed before him, and the sound, intermittent, but more distinct now, seemed to arise from beyond it. Crouching low, the white bear crawled up the gentle slope, and creeping to a large rock lying half-buried on the summit, raised his head cautiously, and looked out over a large, bowl-shaped

The Odyssey of the great Polar bear Alba, lord of the Arctic till the white man made him captive —and again when he won to freedom once more.

Illustrated by Lee Townsend

The dripping conqueror stood erect; he seemed to typify the very spirit of the vast Arctic country.

depression, in the center of which stood a compact group of shaggy, short-horned animals. With their rumps together toward the center of a circle, they faced outward with lowered heads, and among them, crowding close to their long-haired flanks, were several smaller ones of these strange-looking creatures. The attention of this group seemed equally divided between an intensely active combat which was being staged a short distance away, and three grayish, skulking shapes which circled over the tundra at a respectful distance from those lowered heads.

The two combatants were similar in appearance to those which stood in formation, except that they were larger, darker, and possessed longer and more massive horns. Drawing away from one another, they pawed the ground, shook their heads, and working themselves up to the proper pitch of excitement, charged forward and crashed together in a thudding impact which all but drove the breath from their bodies. Tight-locked now, they pushed, gored and pawed each other in frantic confusion, their horns rattling sharply together. Alba was witnessing a struggle between two old musk-ox bulls. The two drew apart, retired a few feet, and with tossing heads and pawing feet, gave mutual challenges which were mutually accepted. In headlong rushes, they closed again. This charge resulted in one of the bulls stumbling slightly just as they met; he slipped to his knees, and was instantly pounced upon by the other and bowled over on his side. As the watching cows excitedly parted their close ranks for a moment one of the calves playfully bounced out of the ring and cavorted over the tundra.

No sooner was it some fifty yards away from the cows, than two of those skulking gray shapes flashed forward, circled the youngster and coming between it and the cows, who were yet unconscious of its absence, drove it farther afield with converging skill. Absorbed in the battle of the bulls, the group heard a sudden bawling note of terror from the calf. Its mother wheeled about, saw the situation, and limbered heavily off toward her offspring in maternal rage and anxiety. Even as she started, however, the third gray shape leaped suddenly from the grass and darted at her throat. Caught unaware, she reared, slipped, and fell upon her side as the calf gave another high-pitched bleat.

Struggling to her feet, the cow made a lunge at the wolf who was hanging to a grip he had gained in the heavy mat of hair at her throat, and raising her forefoot, brought it down like a pile-driver upon the back of the gray marauder. With a choked yelp, it dropped its hold and sprang aside with a lamed shoulder. But the delay had been fatal to the calf; even as the cow had slipped, the other two wolves had leaped

upon the calf, and that high bleat had been its knell. Tearing at the tender throat, they suddenly saw the charging cow bearing down upon them, and darting hurriedly away, circled about and crouched warily.

Alba, having missed no detail of the happenings occurring with such rapidity before him, decided that the time was ripe for his advent, and rising from behind the rock, charged down the little slope with a swiftness which was remarkable considering his bulk. He was seen at once by the two fighters, who promptly forgot their grievances and bellowed a warning as they took to their heels. The cows wheeled about, saw that charging white form, and instantly broke ranks and fled across the tundra.

But Alba did not expect to make a meal of the calf without a fight. Slowing his rush to a shambling trot, the bear proceeded straight toward the crouching wolves who stood between him and the calf. They did not wait for him to attack, but like two gray streaks, left the ground in a silent leap toward his throat.

Alba stopped short as the two sprang, squatted back, and rearing, met them with a lightning blow of his armored paw, dodging quickly as he swept it in a swift arc. The action, ponderous though accurate, caught the nearest wolf full upon the side of the head, crushing bone and sinew with terrific force, and hurling the gray body headlong to one side. So quick was the blow, so devastating in its completeness, that the wolf, struck in mid-air, never reached the ground alive. The second animal gained a slashing, successful cut with his jaws, leaping instantly aside. The third wolf, despite his lame shoulder, darted in and leaped for the bear's back.

A grunting roar of pain and rage burst from Alba as he dropped quickly to all fours, and wheeling about he slashed at that mauling shape near his hindquarters, but was unable to inflict much damage because of the wolf's position. Meanwhile the other wolf had again slashed the bear's flank with another wicked lunge, and dodged away. With a bawl of anger, the bear suddenly rolled over on the ground and, the injured shoulder hampering him severely, the lame wolf was pinned under the huge white body. Just as quickly, Alba regained his feet, and before the gasping animal before him could find a foothold, he had it by the throat.

Savagely the bear shook the gray body. It was over in an instant. The wolf went limp, a gush of crimson stained the tundra, and dropping the dead weight, Alba swung about to face his sole remaining enemy. But the latter had had enough fighting for one day; streaking over the ground, running low, he topped a distant rise even as Alba looked for him, and disappeared over the crest like a fleeting shadow.

Rumbling heavily, and smarting with pain, the old bear licked his bleeding flanks hastily for a moment or two, and turned his attention to the hard-won calf. The juicy beef was tender and succulent, a distinct variation from seal and fish, and Alba reveled inordinately in the feast. Desisting at last, he grasped the remains of the carcass, swung it up, and carried it across to a big rock. Scratching a hole in the soil, he tumbled the body therein and covered it loosely.

AFTER this piece of unusual good fortune, chance seemed to frown upon the white bear's hunting. He consumed the remainder of the calf a day or two afterward, but his subsequent efforts were singularly unsuccessful. The seals were wary; and fishing was very poor, only an occasional salmon rewarding many hours of submarine investigation. He did manage to surprise a goose, about a week after the musk-ox episode, as the bird was feeding in a little slough behind a low ridge of rock, and his rush upon the unsuspecting dabbler gained him the first meat he had eaten in several days. He ate it at once, but realized that he was still hungry. Disgruntled and short-tempered, he foraged unsuccessfully throughout the rest of the day.

That night he slept some distance away from his rocky citadel, and awoke savage, morose, hungry and looking for trouble. After a mile or two of fruitless stalking along the shore, he rounded a jutting headland to find himself on the edge of an ice-field several acres in extent, projecting out into the steely waters of the sound. Upon the edge of the ice, at the water's-edge, he saw something which caused him to sink to his belly while his eyes flamed green with excited satisfaction. Lying there, attended by its huge and clumsy mother, was a walrus calf, and sporting on the surface close by, several more of the unwieldy animals, around which frolicked other youngsters.

As a rule, Alba was very careful about how he conducted himself in regard to walruses. He knew full well that these massive animals were no mean fighters and in

a dispute the bulls had to be reckoned as his equals in dogged persistence.

On this occasion, however, his hunger overrode his caution. He was quite determined to have that walrus calf and was prepared to go to considerable trouble and risk in obtaining it. He surveyed the scene deliberately, and noted that the bulls were not in evidence at the time. The cow who was guarding the youngster was not of great size for a walrus—but there was no way of knowing how long she would remain on the ice, and what was to be done must be done without delay. There was but one procedure open, a stalk across the ice. He crept outward, as flat as he could make himself, and wormed his way by inches across the glistening expanse, his white fur making his approach possible.

So quick was the lightning blow of his armored paw that one wolf never reached the ground alive.

He watched keenly for any movement on the part of the distant animals; when they raised their heads, he remained absolutely motionless, then crept forward once more when they looked away. It took him fully half an hour to cover fifty yards, but this brought him within good range of his objective; he could see their actions more plainly. Another fifteen minutes passed; still his presence remained a secret. At length he stopped, and gathering his muscles tensely, crouched for a long moment, and launched himself in a resistless rush, covering the remaining distance like a white thunderbolt.

It was a complete success. Neither the cow nor the calf had had the slightest intimation of danger. One smashing blow of Alba's huge paw clove the calf's skull as if it were an egg. The sound of the blow roused the cow, who turned with extraordinary agility, to see the white slayer still atop her offspring. Only for an instant, however, for no sooner had he struck than Alba leaped away, and waited in a half-crouching posture. The cow's bulging, ox-like eyes gleamed wickedly, a hoarse, choked bellow arose from her throat. Undauntedly she hurled herself forward in a lumbering, awkward charge.

Alba dodged aside easily, and making a pass at her with his paw, landed squarely on her neck as she blundered past. His claws raked her cruelly, but penetrated only slightly beneath the thick layer of fat, doing no real damage. Turning about, she tensed her muscles again, and rushed at the bear with determined tenacity, bellowing once more—a clearer, higher note. It was her intention to throw herself upon Alba and crush him under her vast weight. This he knew and he continued his dodging, parrying tactics. Slowly he retreated in the hope of luring the walrus away from the water's edge. So intent was he upon this, together with avoiding the constant rushes made upon him, that disaster all but overwhelmed him before he knew it.

Just as he ducked under a headlong attack, and swung aside again, a wide black shadow fell across the ice in front of him. With a startled snarl he veered sharply, and tried to leap sideways; but his feet slipped

at the crucial moment and he fell sprawling, just as a mountainous shape reared high above him and fell forward with a heavy, grunting snort. The bull walrus had taken a hand, and Alba narrowly escaped. That very slip, which had seemed fatal, was really his salvation. He failed to complete the spring, but the impetus carried him several feet across the slippery ice, and shot him out from under that descending bulk. Almost, but not quite—his body went clear, but the walrus crashed upon his hindquarters, and, for the time, held him immovable.

Bawling with rage and pain, Alba wrenched around and slashed frantically at that huge body above him, with furious sweeps of his paws gouging his antagonist's flanks deeply. With a hoarse bellow, the latter heaved upward, aiming a blow at the bear with his enormous tusks. Had that stroke been true, it would have pinned him to the ice as a butterfly to a card. It fell short, however, and as soon as Alba felt that weight lift, he jerked away and slashed at the cow who had now flopped up to the aid of her lord. The blow knocked her aside, and Alba gave a hurried survey about for an avenue of escape.

The two walruses were between him and the shore, but the water was at hand and in a short gallop he reached the ice edge and plunged overboard. His hindquarters pained him considerably, and it would have been foolhardy to attempt any continuation of the conflict. He swam rapidly along the edge of the ice field, gained a position some hundreds of yards below the pair of bellowing monsters behind, and clambered ashore, making off immediately among the tumbled hummocks of the tundra. He was nothing the gainer by his recent effort, and his hunger was greater than ever.

It was, therefore, all the more pleasing for him to find, not far from his rocky retreat, three fine salmon lying on the tundra grass. The incongruity of their presence there caused him neither worry nor speculation. He pounced upon them with relish and devoured them completely. Partly mollified by this bit of good fortune, he retired to the crevice, and easing his aching body into the dim interior, sank with a relieved grunt to a long and uninterrupted rest.

HE awoke in a better humor, but still hungry, and leaving his hunting-grounds along the shore, he penetrated inland for some distance. As he was skirting the edge of a large pool, the insistent, high-pitched yapping of a fox sounded shrilly upon his ears. Curious because of the incessant noise, which seemed to emanate from a fixed spot he decided to investigate. He rounded a rocky buttress, and a few feet beyond it saw an unfamiliar box-like structure, built near the shore of a tiny pond. From this the yapping sound was coming. Alba stopped short, and holding his head high, examined the vicinity with eyes and nose. Unable to discover anything amiss, the bear walked slowly forward, half wondering whether he could surprise this noisy fox and make a meal of him.

The barking ceased suddenly as he walked, and complete stillness reigned. Coming up to the queer-looking contrivance he examined it closely. Suddenly the yapping broke out afresh, seemingly but a foot or so from his nose, and in startled surprise, he drew back and eyed the rocks with fresh interest. Then his curiosity overcame his faint misgivings, and he reared upward, placing his paws upon the topmost edge of the pile of rocks.

As it was almost square, and about three feet in height, he could see the top with ease, and found that it was covered with strips of whalebone, a substance with which he was entirely familiar, for he had fed upon many a carcass thrown ashore. Pressing down upon a section of it, he found that it gave easily, and at that moment a sudden commotion sounded from beneath it—a scratching sound and muffled snarling reached his ears.

Peering downward he saw, dimly outlined in the small interior, the crouching forms of two foxes, staring up at him in wide-eyed alarm. Here, then, was the secret of that stationary barking. With an impatient sweep, he hurled the whalebone roof aside, but finding the interior too deep for satisfactory action, he tore at the topmost layer of rocks until he had diminished the wall on one side, the terror-stricken foxes meanwhile crouching in the farthest corner. Their doom was quick, for, reaching inward, he dashed out the life of first one and then the other with successive blows of his paw. Dragging them forth, he squatted beside the structure and satisfied his hunger. Burying the surplus on the farther side of the little pond, he went on his way immensely satisfied with his morning's foraging.

The finding of the foxes in their queer position did not cause Alba undue wonder—hardly more, in fact, than did the occa-

sional bodies of birds, fish and lemmings which now appeared at rather frequent intervals on the tundra. He disappeared from the vicinity shortly after the raid on the foxes, and wandered far to the westward on an extended hunt.

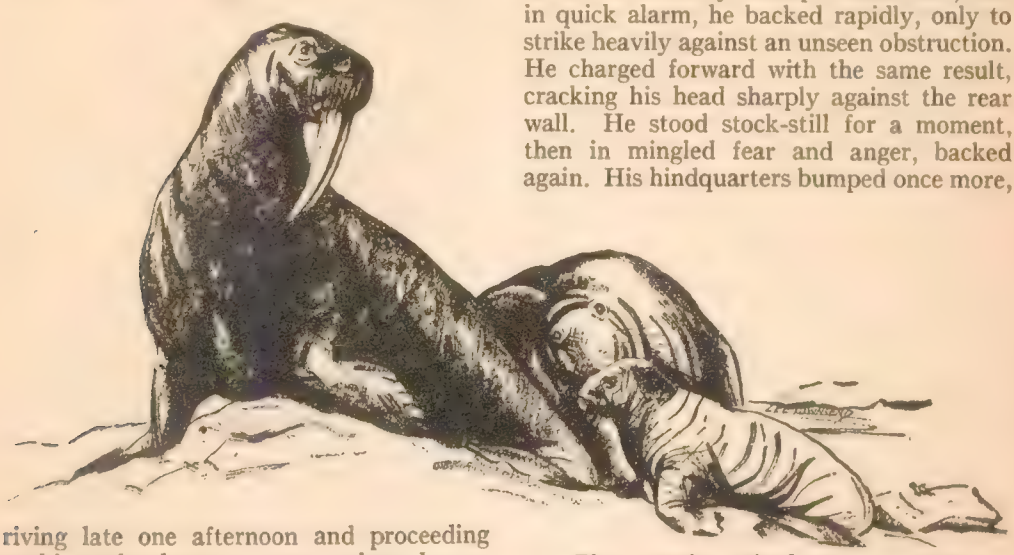
Wearying of travel after a few days, he turned eastward once more, and journeyed slowly back to his old domain, arriving late one afternoon and proceeding to his rocky home at once, where he remained in a state of lazy satisfaction for several hours. Before very long, however, his appetite was at work, and he turned inland, toward the place he had found the foxes. But before he reached the little pond, he made a most interesting discovery. Quite in the open, and near the spot where he had often found dead fish, was a queer structure, certainly placed there recently. Alba stopped as he saw it, and examined it from a distance as he had the other, then cautiously approached.

Coming up to it at last, he found that it had little in common with the other except that rocks had been used in both. This one was much the largest of the two; it was long,—longer than himself,—very narrow, and about seven feet high. Rocks were piled on top of it, as well as around the sides, and the walls were of huge slabs of ice. It was a most substantial-looking affair. The bear circled it slowly. Coming to the farther end he discovered that it was open, and from it came the smell of one of his favorite items of food, seal-meat. Walking up to the opening, he peered inside.

At the far end was an indistinct object which he recognized as a piece of this delectable provender, and as he found that he could enter the narrow structure easily enough,—although having but a few inches of clearance at each side,—he did not hesitate. Padding onward, he gained the end, reached down and seizing the meat, pulled it toward him.

Instantly something happened.

The dim interior became suddenly dark; there was a heavy thump behind him, and in quick alarm, he backed rapidly, only to strike heavily against an unseen obstruction. He charged forward with the same result, cracking his head sharply against the rear wall. He stood stock-still for a moment, then in mingled fear and anger, backed again. His hindquarters bumped once more, a grunt came from him, and he sank to the ground, puzzled and alarmed.



These massive animals were no mean fighters, and in a dispute the bulls were Alba's equals in dogged persistence.

Now he became furiously angry, and jumping to his feet, made a reckless, headlong rush forward. But he took only two or three steps before crashing again into the end of the enclosure. He drew back, and threw himself from side to side violently, but made not the slightest tremor in those side walls. For a half hour, in bawling, furious rage, he surged back and forth—without result except that of inducing fatigue, together with a very sore head and rump. At last he desisted from sheer weariness, and again sank to his belly, while a sense of fear began to replace his anger.

Then from the outside, near at hand, he heard something which caused him to leap upright and stand in quivering expectancy. It was the sound of a human voice.

SOME days previously, an unusual thing had happened about five miles eastward of Alba's rocky citadel. Several dog-teams, driven by six men, had appeared from the

southward, and set up a small, compact camp near the shore. This small company was a detachment of scientists on a collecting trip from a base expedition on Southampton Island, to take certain birds and animals along the edges of the tundra lakes. They were accompanied by three Eskimo guides, and the captain of the ship.

As it happened, Alba had been hunting to the westward during their arrival and first few days of stay, but signs of his occupancy of the region were read by the Eskimos, and imparted to their white masters. One of the scientists, an alert young man, was elated at the news, since they had been commissioned to procure, if possible, a live specimen of polar bear for the zoölogical garden of the big city whence they had come. He became fired with the idea of trapping the bear, and in this resolve he was heartily backed by the ship's captain, an enthusiastic sportsman but possessing the regrettable trait of a violent and vindictive temper.

The young scientist, Emerson, questioned the natives as to methods of trapping, but they, having never had occasion to dream of taking the great white bear of the North alive, had little to say, and were singularly averse to the enterprise. They understood only too well what the venture entailed, and discouraged any attempt at it. This did not dampen Emerson's enthusiasm. He discussed the matter with Captain Talbot, but they could arrive at no definite conclusion. Steel traps were to be avoided except as a last resort, for he wanted to trap the bear uninjured. While he was racking his brain for a solution of the problem, he distributed at various points upon the tundra, offerings of fish, ducks and other tidbits, in hope the bear would be rendered easier of capture when chance came.

In this he was signally successful. Alba, in his wanderings, came across the baits, and devoured them readily. By turning westward, he had not discovered the camp. At last, in considering a substitute for the fox-snares which Alba had despoiled, Emerson hit upon a plan. He had been disappointed in finding the rifled fox trap, for he wished to catch some of those animals alive also, but it occurred to him that a very strong, enlarged trap of that same type might prove successful in taking the bear.

EMERSON outlined his plan to the others and enlisted their aid. Captain Talbot was emphatic in his opinion that it was the very thing; the other scientist was uncertain, but was willing to try. Taking the natives, they repaired on the following day to a spot about two miles from the camp where Emerson had left fish on former occasions, and set about erecting a rude but substantial structure. It was an enlargement of the typical Eskimo wolf-trap, built of slabs of ice, but with treble the strength and durability. Using heavy pieces, and bracing them firmly with numerous rocks, they built a long, narrow pen, raising the sides to a height of about seven feet, and covering it with stout pieces of driftwood, weighted down with more rocks.

At the rear, a hole was made in the close-fitting end slab, and inside the trap a ring of wire was attached to a stout line running through the hole and leading back over the roof of the structure to the sliding door at the front. This door was constructed of another heavy slab running smoothly in grooves on each side, and working easily. A strong peg, pointing inward, was driven into the ground at the inside of the trap just below the hole in the slab through which ran the cord. A bait was to be attached to the wire ring, and the latter pulled downward and looped over the peg. The door was then raised, the other end of the cord attached to it and drawn taut. The slightest pull or tug at the bait loosened the ring from the peg, whereupon the door, freed of support, fell instantly downward.

The device was thoroughly tested, the Captain himself insisting upon entering the trap and pulling at the ring, and evincing satisfaction at the instant falling of the door. Naturally, much of the trap's efficacy lay in the fact that the movements of the captive were extremely restricted.

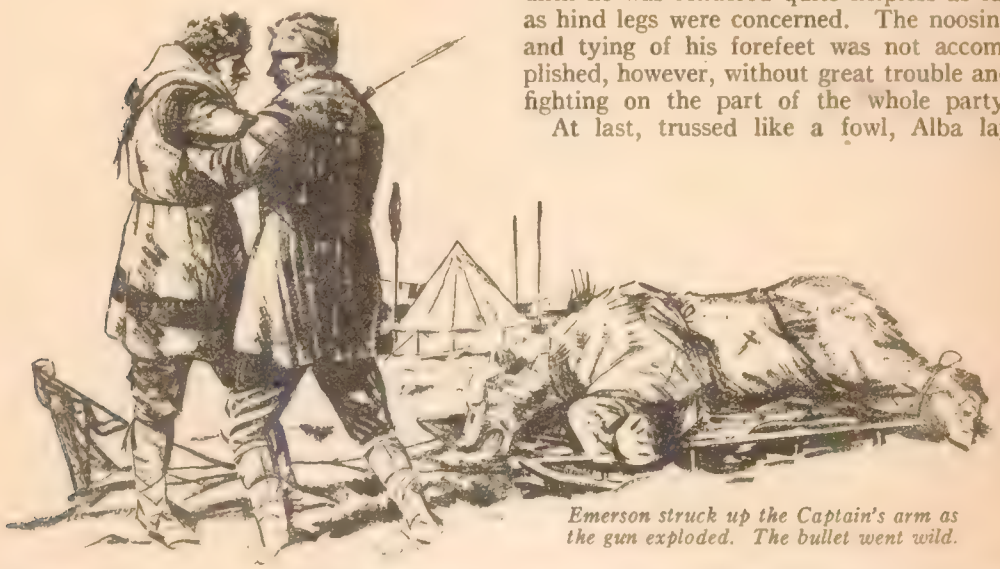
Upon visiting the spot in the afternoon of the next day, they found everything just as they had left it. Another day passed; early the following morning Emerson and Talbot set off for a second visit.

No sooner had they reached a position from which they could see clearly, than they noted, even from a distance, that the door was down. With shouts of joy they rushed toward it, and ascertaining by a cautious investigation that the bear was really inside, they rejoiced audibly.

Now that their plan had been successful, Emerson set about the harder and more complicated task of taking the bear from the trap and preparing him for transportation. With his usual foresight, the young

scientist had worked this out tentatively, and he began the task at once. He dispatched the willing Talbot to the camp for the other men. After waiting impatiently for some time he saw his companions approaching. They had brought one sled and all the stout rope which the camp afforded.

Outlining his plans to the others, Emerson set to work. He prepared several lengths of line, making running nooses in three of them, then, climbing to the roof of the trap, he cautiously uncovered a section near the rear wall.



Emerson struck up the Captain's arm as the gun exploded. The bullet went wild.

This called for considerable nerve and careful work. As the hole in the roof opened, Alba reared upward in a furious lunge, his paws against the rear wall, and shoved his nose through the aperture, dropping back almost at once because of the cramped position. Carefully the man on top removed another section; up came that narrow head again,—fully exposed now,—and as quickly as thought, Emerson snaked the noose about it and drew it taut.

A snarling bawl came from the bear and he dropped like a flash. Holding the rope tight, Emerson descended to the rear of the trap, straining heavily at the line with the assistance of an Eskimo. He then directed Talbot to raise the door carefully, and ascertain the bear's position. Alba was stretched at full length, unable to reach the noose with his paws, and having his head close to the rear wall. Talbot now took another noose, and with considerable difficulty, managed to lasso the hindlegs of the frantic animal. Only the narrowness of the trap made this procedure possible.

Slackening his rope a little, Emerson allowed the others to drag the bear toward the door, and as the hindfeet appeared, he again tightened the line. The choking grip about Alba's throat took the fight out of him for a moment, and more rope was thrown about the hinder part of his body until he was rendered quite helpless as far as hind legs were concerned. The noosing and tying of his forefeet was not accomplished, however, without great trouble and fighting on the part of the whole party.

At last, trussed like a fowl, Alba lay impotent and snarling outside the trap before his captors, who mopped perspiring faces and gazed at each other and the bear with mingled weariness and triumph. Another struggle ensued in placing Alba on the sled, though his resistance was feeble, due to his bonds; it was the bear's size which made the difficulty. The management of the dogs was no small item, but in this the Eskimos were invaluable. It was late when they finally reached the camp, and all hands were thoroughly exhausted.

A long rest refreshed them, however, and though their work at this locality was not quite complete, Emerson decided to return at once to the expedition's base, and get his captive into less restricted quarters. He dispatched one of the Eskimos ahead with a note, asking that a substantial cage be prepared for the valuable acquisition to their collection, and the native was soon out of sight on his mission. Breaking camp, the rest followed as soon as possible, but their progress was very slow and tedious.

IT was on the second day of the return journey that an incident occurred which all but set their heartbreaking labors at

naught. It began with a kindly intention on the part of Captain Talbot. At the noonday rest he offered Alba a fish, and rather careless of his movements and proximity to the bear, bent over him and extended his offering. As quickly as a striking snake, that narrow head leaped upward; those keen teeth reached the unwary Captain's hand, and slashed it to the bone.

Jumping backward with a startled outcry, the man's foot slipped, and he fell, striking his head sharply upon the hard ground. With a furious imprecation, he leaped to his feet and jerking out his pistol, leveled it at the bear. Emerson leaped forward and struck up the Captain's arm as the gun exploded, and the bullet went wild. The man fought to gain a second shot, but the others, coming to Emerson's aid, held him until he regained some degree of control. Then they released him, and dressed the bleeding wound. But from that time onward, Talbot eyed the bear with a vindictive hatred. The great bear was quick to realize the man's enmity, and his snarling growls and blazing eyes when Talbot was near, gave proof of his own ill-will. It was with intense relief that Emerson saw, on the third day, an approaching party which had left the base camp to aid him.

At the base at last, their troubles seemed over. The ship's carpenter had done his work well, and with adequate tools and materials, had prepared a stout, roomy cage—a most welcome sight to the men who had borne the tedium of caring for the roped animal. It was hardly less welcome to Alba himself, and he was quickly placed within, and the ropes loosened and removed. When his bonds dropped away he delivered a furious assault upon the bars, but quickly realized that he was still a captive, though more comfortable than at any time since the door of the trap had fallen behind him.

He was greatly irritated, during the days that followed, by admiring groups of sailors and other members of the expedition who gathered in front of his cage, and displayed bursts of rage at their stares.

To Emerson's great relief and satisfaction, the bear ate freely, though only while alone. He was plentifully supplied, and his captivity did not seem to affect anything but his temper. Only Captain Talbot regarded him with anything but admiration.

It almost seemed as though Fate was bent upon increasing the animosity between the bear and the Captain. Late one afternoon, a startled, high-pitched yelp came from near the cage, and investigation revealed a tragedy. Those who ran to the spot found the Captain's little fox-terrier, a playful favorite of his, lying in a pool of blood a few inches from the bars. The little animal, sniffing about the cage, had ventured too near the motionless bear, and from that inert white form had flashed a mighty paw, which had fallen full upon the terrier, crushing it, lifeless, to the deck.

Alba, jumping to his feet as men came running, drew back into a corner, and snarled defiance. The Captain cursed him with fluent profanity. But over the collections Emerson's word was law—only this prevented Talbot from another murderous attack upon the white captive.

TWO weeks passed; then preparations were made for the departure from the North. Early one morning they weighed anchor, and moved slowly away from the island with all specimens packed, notes arranged, and everything secure. Alba's cage was placed on the forehatch, braced with ropes and timbers against the motion of the ship. Bewildered by the bustle attendant upon departure, the bear spent most of the time crowded into one corner, but as quiet regained sway, and the usual work and watch of a ship at sea took place, he would stand erect near the bars, and either stare out over the heaving waters, or swing his body from side to side with monotonous regularity, as his head brushed against the bars. His seeming resignation and inscrutably brooding eyes affected Emerson strangely. The man often sat for a long while before the cage, watching that swaying form, and frequently the bear's eyes would meet his in a half-questioning, haunting gaze. On one occasion, after such a look, he spoke aloud to his white captive in a singularly regretful tone.

"I guess I've done you a scurvy trick, old man," he said slowly. "You're as much a part of this country as the ice and the Borealis—and I'm taking you away from it forever. Somehow, I don't get the kick out of it that I thought I would."

Talbot, however, entertained no such feelings, and he never passed the cage without a revengeful glare at the silent, swaying figure within.

The ship plowed on across the Bay, turned eastward through Hudson Strait, and pointed her bow southward along the rugged coast of Labrador. Some hundred or two miles below the jutting Cape Chidley they

entered, one night, into a dense fog-belt. The engines were slowed down, and amid swirling, dripping wreaths of grayish vapor they groped their way. The sea was fairly open, little ice having been seen of late, but toward morning a cold norther roared down from the murky gloom astern, and chilled the watch on deck with its icy breath. It served, however, to clear away the fog, and in the growing light, the Captain rang the engine-room telegraph to half speed. Dimly seen blotches of white, passing ghost-like upon the heaving waters, proclaimed the dangerous presence of ice-floes.

Perhaps the bow look-out was numbed and drowsy from his long exposure; perhaps the vague half light was deceptive as to distance, or perhaps the dancing white-caps merged too completely with the low-lying outline of the floe—be that as it may, suddenly, without warning, a violent concussion vibrated throughout the ship.

There was a sound of rending metal and splintering wood, a long, grating wrench, and with a sickening lurch, the vessel heeled drunkenly to starboard, listing heavily. The blow had thrown everything movable into a heap. Men pitched from their bunks, crockery leaped from shelves and tables, and in wild disorder, jangling bells, shouted commands, and blasts of escaping steam mingled in hurrying confusion.

With admirable coolness, Captain Talbot restored discipline. A hurried investigation proved that the situation was desperate indeed. The bows were completely crushed in. The steamer had struck a huge mass of low floating ice, and only the closing of the compartment doors was keeping it above the surface. It was plain that she was doomed, and the boats were ordered out.

The scientists were striving in desperation to save what they could of their notes and records, for nothing bulky could be taken in the boats. An ominous cracking, a gurgling rush of collapsing bulkheads below decks urged them to greater haste. Captain Talbot, pausing in his supervision of the work about the boats, ran forward for a moment, and as he passed the cage upon the forehatch, halted suddenly. The bear stood rigidly immovable, gazing with wide eyes at the scurrying forms which passed and repassed his cage. He turned his stare upon the Captain, and a snarl curled his lips, while red gleams shone from his narrowed eyes.

The man stepped close, and shook a clenched fist at the imprisoned animal.

"At last," he muttered, "my chance has come—I'll settle with you right now!"

He drew his pistol, gazed down the short barrel, then lowered it as another idea leaped into his mind and he grinned in savage satisfaction.

"Shooting's too good for you, you white devil!" he said aloud. "I'll let the sea do for you, as it has for us. You can drown like a rat in a trap, and be damned to you!"

Turning on his heel, he walked rapidly away, shouting an order.

"Boats away!" he cried. "Lively, everybody! Abandon ship!"

Emerson, appearing on deck with his arms loaded with books and small boxes, stopped as his eye fell upon the cage. In the excitement he had totally forgotten the bear. Running to the cage, he glanced hurriedly at the still figure standing there. In the animal's eyes there was mute appeal once more. Darting to the nearest boat, Emerson threw his load into it, and returned to the cage. Muttering excitedly, he looked about with wild impatience as the deck trembled underfoot. As he looked, he caught sight of an ax, standing in a socket on the foremast. He leaped toward it, snatched the keen tool from its fastenings, and whirling it above his head, crashed it into the stout wooden side of Alba's cage.

Again and again he struck, savagely, hurriedly, as warning yells came to his ears. At last, with a splintering, tearing sound, he saw the partition totter. Dropping the ax and running to the side, he leaped out upon the boat-falls, and went down the ropes to the already floating craft.

As the boats were pulling away, Captain Talbot appeared on the deck above, stuffing the ship's papers into his pocket; then, in a flying leap, he made the rearmost boat.

AGAIN the vessel lurched, a sickening, drunken, wallowing motion, her port side rose into the air, and settled backward as the bows dipped below the waters. A sudden yell broke out from one of the boats.

Upon the rail, huge, white and massive, appeared a royal form which raised a narrow, wedge-shaped head to stare outward for a moment, over the tumbling waters. Then, in a clean, arching dive, it left the sinking vessel, to disappear beneath the sea. A cheer, spontaneous and involuntary, broke from the watching men as that white head appeared once more, while with steady, powerful strokes, Alba headed toward the distant shore-line.

From a dark doorway dashed a figure in ranch garb. He came fast—and he came smoking!

Illustrated by
J. Fleming Gould

Naturally Cantankerous

Wherein a man from the West brings his friends to handle a gangster crew in the city—and much happens.

By SEVEN ANDERTON

CLIFF REYNOLDS, strolling along Michigan Boulevard, was telling himself that Chicago had been much over-advertised.

"They call this a wild burg," muttered Reynolds. "My eye! There's more excitement in Ponca City."

Young Reynolds had been in Chicago five days and every fiber in his healthy body was crying for action. He wanted to expand himself. He had come to Chicago because the lake city had been so touted by the press as a hell-bender of a town. But he had been sadly disappointed. He had seen a dozen shows, put in an afternoon at a bathing-beach, prowled the streets at all hours and had drunk considerable beer and other more potent hooch at blind pigs which kept one eye very much open. Nothing happened during all that time that gave the seeker after excitement even a mild thrill.

Cliff Reynolds was wealthy. His father had died while Cliff was attending the World War, and the youngster, upon his return from France, found himself owner of the Cross-R Ranch, consisting of a large hunk of Oklahoma.

Recently those acres of grazing land had begun to spout oil, so Cliff had placed a foreman in charge of the Cross-R and hied himself to Chicago. His pockets were stuffed with legal tender and he was open to consider all propositions, but Chicago had failed him.

"Thunder! You couldn't raise a disturbance in this burg with a barrel of whisky and a case of dynamite!" he continued to ruminate. "I'd better have stayed in God's country."

Then the young Westerner's eye fell on the gaudy awning of an exclusive night-club. The awning stretched from the door of the club to the curb, on a side-street that led off the boulevard. The place was brilliantly lighted and the sound of a jazz orchestra reached Reynolds' ears. He turned his steps toward the club. Just as well go in and have a little drink, he told himself. Perhaps something would happen.

"No gentlemen admitted alone," apologized the doorman as Reynolds paused at the door.

"My lady friend is to meet me here in half an hour," said Reynolds, smiling. "Please get me a table back in a corner where I can have a drink while I'm waiting. My name is Reynolds. She'll ask for me when she arrives."

The doorman looked Reynolds over and saw nothing to make him doubt the story. Cliff was dressed in a perfectly tailored suit and other tasteful haberdashery. But for his sun- and wind-tanned skin, and the loose ease of his carriage, there was nothing to indicate that he was a son of the Western ranges hunting excitement in Chicago.

The doorman beckoned to a waiter and Reynolds was soon seated at a table in a secluded corner. He ordered a bottle of ale and sat sipping it as he watched the other diners and the dancers who wiggled about the floor to the hectic strains of the jazz orchestra.

HE began to wonder why he had come into the place. It was quite apparent that not even a flirtation was going to offer itself. He'd drink his ale and slip out.

Just as he raised his glass to his lips after making his decision there was a commotion at the door. In a jiffy the place was in a panic. *"Raid!"*—the word spread like wildfire about the huge room. Cliff glanced toward the door and saw a group of men in plain-clothes, followed by several uniformed policemen, rush into the room.

Now a ride in a patrol-wagon and a night in a cell was not Cliff Reynolds' idea of excitement. He glanced quickly around and saw a window beside the table at which he sat. The window had been painted to rid it of transparency, but Cliff reasoned that it must lead to some sort of outside. With a bound he left his chair and thrust his foot through the window, clearing the frame of both sash and glass. Looking through the opening he had made, Reynolds saw a dark narrow alley. He dropped hastily to the bricks with which the alley was paved and raced toward the street farthest from the club where the raid was in progress.

"Halt!"

Cliff heard the command from behind, as he sped toward the end of the alley. He merely increased his speed.

THERE was the *spat* of a police-revolver. Cliff heard a bullet whine above his head. Two more strides and he was around the corner. Another block of sprinting; then he saw a policeman standing in his path under the light cast by a street-lamp. Cliff ducked into another alley even as he heard the officer shout something at him. He knew that the cop would soon be on his trail; perhaps another would be waiting when he emerged from the farther end of this alley. On he raced, alert for a place of refuge. He had no desire to be a target for police-guns. Suddenly a board fence loomed on his right. Over that fence he went, dropping into a small yard.

Across the yard, lights shone dimly through windows on each side of a door. He ran quickly to the door and tried it. It was not locked; he opened it and stepped into what was evidently a restaurant kitchen.

The kitchen, a small room, was deserted, but from the front of the place came the sound of voices. Reynolds moved swiftly but quietly to a door that evidently led out to the dining-room. Peering around the edge of the door, he saw a long narrow dining-room, comfortably furnished and dimly lighted. Beside a table near the center stood a girl and a burly man.

"Listen, sister," the man was saying. "Don't try to spoof me. The boss sent me to tell you where to get off, and I'm tellin' you. You're peddlin' somebody's hooch in this dump—and it aint ours. This territory belongs to the boss. You'll buy your stuff from us, or you'll move out of this territory!"

"Please, Mister," begged the girl. "I don't sell liquor of any kind. I run a restaurant—and nothing else. I'm telling you the truth. I don't buy liquor from anybody—and I don't want to."

"Cut the kiddin'," snapped the man. "I wasn't born yesterday. I've been in this dump all evening. Half of the crowd was pickled when you kicked 'em out of here fifteen minutes ago at closing-time."

"I can't help that," replied the girl. "They bring bottles in their pockets. As long as they don't become rowdies I can't make them leave. I need their business."

"Listen, you little runt," snarled the man. "Cut the comedy! What I want to know is whether you are goin' to buy your hooch from the boss or not."

DARTING from the door of the kitchen, Cliff Reynolds came quickly across the floor and confronted the man who was bullying the girl.

"What's the big idea, fellow?" snapped Cliff. "I gather you are calling this little lady a liar."

"Who the hell are you?" snarled the burly one. "You better duck while you are all in one piece."

Suddenly Reynolds' slightly stooped figure uncoiled. His right fist, starting somewhere near the floor, collided with the burly individual's jaw—and that worthy tripped over a chair and crashed to the floor. As the fallen man gained his wits he reached behind his hip. Reynolds saw that move; his hand flashed out and grabbed a sugar-bowl from a table beside him. With all his strength he hurled the china missile and its contents at the prostrate man. It struck the fellow squarely in the face and he sank limply to the floor, uttering a strangling cry as he fell.

In a single bound Reynolds was astride the limp figure. In a moment his swift fingers had found what they sought and he stood erect holding in his hand the automatic for which the fellow had been reaching. Reynolds turned to face the wide-eyed girl.

"Make this place dark!" he snapped.

The girl ran to a switch on the wall near the kitchen door, Reynolds at her heels, and plunged the place into darkness.

"Front door locked?" he whispered.

"Yes."

"Lock the back one, quick."

She moved away through the darkness and Reynolds heard the sound of a bolt being shot. Then the girl was at his side. In the darkness his hand sought and found her wrist. He gripped it hard.

"Be still," warned Reynolds. "I've got all the cops in Chicago on my trail."

TEN minutes passed in absolute silence. Then a deep moan sounded in the darkness, from the man Reynolds had felled.

"Guess we're safe," whispered Reynolds. "I haven't heard anybody try the door. Turn on the light—that bird is waking up."

The switch clicked and the lights flared up. The fallen man was squirming and moaning now with returning consciousness. Reynolds and the girl moved to his side. The sugar-bowl had utterly ruined the fellow's nose. His face and clothes were smeared with blood.

"What was this bozo raising hell with you about?" demanded Reynolds.

"He works for Luigi Rosselli," explained the girl. "He said Rosselli sent him to tell me that I had to buy liquor from Rosselli. He seemed to think that I was selling liquor here, but I'm not. I just run a restaurant."

"Rosselli is the fellow who bosses one of these gangs that the papers are always talking about, aint he?" demanded Reynolds.

"Yes," she replied.

"Bring me a glass of cold water," ordered the youth.

A FEW moments later the girl thrust a glass into Reynolds' hand. He bent over the burly form on the floor and dashed the water into the big fellow's face.

"Listen, *hombre,*" snapped Reynolds, a few minutes later when the now-conscious gangster had been dragged into a chair. "This lady tells me you have been trying to make her sell booze when she doesn't want to. If you and this guy you work for want to stay healthy, you'd better let this girl alone. You can tell your boss that—and tell him Cliff Reynolds said it. Now get out!"

With Reynolds hastening his departure, the vanquished gangster left the restaurant by the front door. He hurried across the deserted sidewalk and piled into a car that stood at the curb.

"That's that," observed the boy from Oklahoma, as he closed the front door and turned to face the girl.

"Mister," said the girl quietly, "your intentions are good, but you have certainly put me out of business. I'm not kicking, because I guess I was on the hummer anyhow. This Rosselli and his gang are killers. They'll get you and me both for this."

"Miss," cried Reynolds suddenly, "you talk like my own kind of folks. Is Chicago your home?"

"It is now," answered the girl, "but I came here from Kansas."

"Shake!" chortled Reynolds, extending a brown hand. "I hail from Oklahoma."

Reynolds turned to face the wide-eyed girl. "Make this place dark!" he snapped.

SOLEMNLY they shook hands. "Now tell me what all this is about," ordered Reynolds.

"Well," the girl explained, "I started this restaurant several months ago. People came and liked my cooking and told other people. I've had a wonderful trade and it has kept getting better. But during the last two weeks, Rosselli's men have been bothering me to death. It seems that my place is in the territory where Rosselli sells booze. He thinks I am buying booze from some other party and insists that I stop it and buy from him. As a matter of fact, I am selling or buying no liquor whatever. I even ask my customers to leave if they get too full of what they bring in themselves."

"I get the idea," nodded Reynolds.

"Well," continued the girl, "you see that I'm as good as out of business."

"I don't see anything of the kind," retorted Reynolds. "You go right on and run your restaurant. I'll take care of this Rosselli and his gang. I've just been loafing around this burg wanting something to do."

"You're awfully good," murmured the girl, laying her hand on his arm, "but you'll be awfully dead, if you start anything with Rosselli's gang. You just fade out of the picture and I'll close up this place. I've made a little money and I can start over somewhere else."

"And you come from Kansas!" snorted Reynolds, pointing to a chair. "Sit down; I want to talk to you!"

When Cliff Reynolds left the Blue Teacup, as the girl had named her restaurant, it was well past one o'clock A.M. He went down the street in search of a prowling taxi that would take him to his hotel. He whistled softly as he thought of the vivid beauty of the little Kansas girl he had just left.

She had told him her name was Alberta Massey. Like himself, she was an orphan.

"Sweet kid," muttered Reynolds, stepping to the curb to hail a taxi that hove into view. "I like her."

AT one o'clock the following afternoon, young Reynolds walked into the Blue Teacup restaurant. Alberta Massey came hurrying to meet him. There was a troubled look in her eyes.

"Anything happen?" asked Reynolds in a low tone.

"Rosselli called me up," answered the girl. "He told me to have my place closed by sundown Saturday, or take the consequences."

"So?" Reynolds nodded. "Well, you go right on with your business like I told you to. This is only Thursday. I've got almost two days to get ready to give Mr. Rosselli the surprise of his life."

"Please give this idea up, Mr. Reynolds!" the girl pleaded. "You can't beat Rosselli and his gang."

"Maybe so, Miss Massey," grinned Reynolds, "but I'll have to have a try at it before I'm convinced. You go right ahead and run this place. I'll see you later."

Before the girl could answer, Reynolds turned on his heel and left the restaurant. On the street he halted and stood surveying his surroundings. Directly across the street was a three-story brick house. A placard on the front door told passers-by that furnished rooms were for rent within. Reynolds walked across the street and rang the bell.

Fifteen minutes later, when he emerged from the house, he was a tenant. His rent for two front rooms on the second floor was paid for a month in advance, and he had a key to the front door in his pocket. He hailed a passing taxicab and ordered the driver to take him to the nearest telegraph office.

At the office, Reynolds handed the girl a message and requested that it be rushed to its destination. The wire was addressed to Bob Mitchell, at Cross-R Ranch, Nelson, Oklahoma. It read:

I got trouble. Bring Rusty, Swede and Dick. Take airplane from Oklahoma City tonight. Join me at North Star Hotel, Chicago, P. D. Q.

CLIFF.

Reynolds paid the girl for the message and left the office, grinning happily. Chicago wasn't a bad burg, after all!

IT was nine o'clock on Friday morning when Cliff Reynolds was awakened by his telephone. The girl at the switchboard informed him that four gentlemen who wished to see him were waiting in the lobby.

"Are they gentlemen or longhorns?" demanded Cliff.

"Well," answered the girl, "I don't know what a longhorn is, but—"

"Send 'em up," chuckled Reynolds, hanging up the receiver.

A few moments later, Reynolds opened the door to admit four men. Three of them were young, husky and evidently uncomfortable in the "store clothes" they wore. The fourth was past fifty, gray of hair and bow-legged. He was dressed in the garments of a typical ranch-hand.

"Hello, you buzzards!" cried Reynolds, shaking hands with each of the newcomers. "Did you get any sleep on the way up?"

"Sleep!" snorted the grizzled old cowhand, Rusty Pangborn by name. "Sleep in one of them cussed air broncos? They ought to have mufflers. They make more racket than a bull calf that has lost his mammy."

"Well," chuckled Reynolds, "here's one bed and I've got the room next door rented. Pile into the hay and get some sleep."

"Thought you had trouble!" protested a big towheaded youth whose name was Ben Larson—"Swede" to his friends. "Who wants to sleep when there's loose trouble around?"

"Don't worry, Swede," laughed Reynolds. "You and the rest of the boys hit the hay. This trouble wont be ripe until tomorrow evening."

After a little more argument, Reynolds persuaded the quartet to pile into the beds he had engaged for them, promising to waken them for a powwow later in the day.

HAVING put his husky reinforcements to bed, Reynolds left the hotel and called at the office of a lawyer. Taking the lawyer with him, he went to the Blue Teacup, where they went into private session with the slender brown-eyed proprietor. Miss Massey accepted a sum of money from Reynolds and some legal papers were signed.

At five o'clock that afternoon, Reynolds returned to his hotel and routed from their beds the four who had arrived via airplane that morning. Shortly afterward the four attached their signatures to imposing-looking documents in the presence of the lawyer and at Reynolds' request.

"Now what's this all about?" demanded Swede Larson, when the lawyer had departed.

"You boys are now partners with me and a young lady in a restaurant," replied Reynolds.

"Yeah?" spoke up Rusty Pangborn. "That bein' the case, let's go and eat."

"We'll eat *pronto*, Rusty," chuckled Reynolds, "but first, I want to explain something to all of you. We bought this restaurant so that we can protect our property and still be within the law."

"Who in hell wants to be within the law?" demanded a husky dark-haired chap called Dick Mattson.

"We all do—in Chicago," answered Reynolds. "You fellows want to remember that this aint our home range. Now listen while I give you the low-down on the lay of the land."

For fifteen minutes young Reynolds talked while the others listened. He told them what the situation was with regard to Alberta Massey and her restaurant. He also told them many other things. When the conference was ended the five of them took a cab for the Blue Teacup restaurant.

There Reynolds introduced Alberta Massey to his companions and she took their orders for supper.

"Is that our partner?" demanded Bob Mitchell, a lean, raw-boned young chap.

"Yes," answered Reynolds.

"Some partner!" ejaculated Mitchell.

It was an hour after dark when the five friends left the restaurant and crossed the street. Reynolds unlocked the door of the house where he had engaged rooms and led his companions upstairs.

"There are two good beds," declared Reynolds. "You fellows roll in. I'm going to call you at daylight. I'll sleep on this lounge."

TRUE to his word, Reynolds roused his friends at daylight. They dressed and went to breakfast in a near-by coffee-shop. The Blue Teacup was not yet open for business. When they had returned to their rooms, Reynolds addressed his companions.

"Listen, Rusty," he said to the grizzled cow-hand, "I suppose you've got those guns of yours?"

"You'll be wantin' to know whether I brought my teeth next," chuckled Rusty. "They're over there in that war-bag."

"Now, fellow," snapped Reynolds, "I want to know where to find Luigi Rosselli—right now. You'd better come clean!"

"Get them," ordered Reynolds.

Rusty went to a battered suitcase and returned with two long-barreled revolvers. He handed them to Cliff. The young man took the weapons, broke them and emptied their chambers of cartridges.

"Stick them in your belt," he commanded as he returned them to Rusty. "Then draw them and fan them at that wastebasket over yonder. I want to see if you are still as fast as ever."

Rusty thrust the guns into the waistband of his trousers. Then, with a movement almost too fast for the eye to follow, he whipped both guns from his waist. There was a hiss of clicks as the hammers of the pistols fell on empty chambers. The muzzles of both weapons covered the wastebasket that Reynolds had indicated as a target.

"Fair enough, Rusty," smiled Reynolds.

"You'll get a chance to do your stuff before morning. Grease up those guns and load them."

Then he turned to Dick Mattson, who had been decorated with an expert rifleman's badge during his service with the army in France. Cliff pointed to a rifle that stood in the corner of the room.

"Look that rifle over, Dick," he commanded; "get it in shape so you'll know you aren't going to make any misses with it."

IT was nine o'clock that evening when Reynolds left the Blue Teacup and crossed the street to the house in which his comrades waited.

"Things ought to happen pretty soon now," he observed as he entered the room where his friends sat. "Rusty, you and Swede get on your jobs. Mitchell, you beat it across to the restaurant and sit tight at the table where Miss Massey puts you. I've told her to see that all her customers sit away from the front of the place. Dick will stay here with me. I may be wrong, but I've been studying this Rosselli's methods. If he runs true to form, we'll have him on our hip shortly."

All but Reynolds and Mattson departed from the room. Reynolds turned out the lights and both men took their posts beside an open window. Across Mattson's knees lay the rifle. On the other side of the street, lights shone from the windows of the Blue Teacup.

Slowly the minutes dragged past. Ten o'clock came, then ten-thirty. A large, powerful touring-car came around the corner from Michigan Boulevard and rolled along the side-street until it was in front of the Blue Teacup. One of the curtains on the big car lifted, an arm shot out with a quick movement and the car leaped ahead with a spurt. There was a deafening roar and the front of the Blue Teacup Restaurant buckled and caved in, amid a billowing mass of white smoke.

"Get 'em!" hissed Cliff Reynolds.

The rifle whipped to the shoulder of expert-rifleman Mattson. Twice the rifle spat spitefully. At each report there was an echo as the two tires on the right side of the car from which the bomb had been cast exploded. The disabled car swerved in toward the right-hand curb, then swung out again as the driver got it under control and made an effort to speed away despite the flat tires.

Suddenly another car swung out from the curb where it had been parked. Swede Larson was driving that car, a rented one. It gained a position directly in front of the gangster's car. Then Swede slammed on the brakes and the car halted.

An unearthly yell rang on the night air, as from a dark doorway a figure in ranch-hand garb dashed into the light. It was Rusty Pangborn. He came fast—and he came smoking. The five armed gangsters who leaped from the halted auto wilted under the hail of lead from Rusty's blazing guns. The last of the five hoodlums hit the pavement and whirled, his guns leveled, to locate his foe. Two bullets smashed his wrists and the guns he had held clattered to the street at his feet. In a moment Rusty Pangborn was beside him.

"Keep ahead of me, *hombre,*" growled Rusty. "And move fast!"

The night air was suddenly alive with police whistles and the sirens of speeding riot-cars. The law arrived in bunches. All they found was a dynamited café, two stalled and abandoned automobiles and the lifeless bodies of four gangsters.

Up in the rooms which Cliff Reynolds had rented, a wounded gangster cowered before his grim-faced captors. Both of the prisoner's wrists had been shattered by Rusty's well-aimed bullets. Rusty Pangborn, Swede Larson and Dick Mattson stood covering the wounded wretch. Rusty had assured him that the slightest sound from his lips would be his death-warrant.

Tense beside an open window stood Cliff Reynolds, his eyes glued to the wrecked front of the café across the street. Then the figure of a woman appeared amid the ruins. It was Alberta Massey, and in her right hand fluttered a white handkerchief. With a sigh of relief Reynolds turned back toward his comrades and their prisoner. That signal had told him that nobody had been hurt by the bombing of the restaurant.

"Now, fellow," snapped Reynolds, facing the prisoner, "I've got a deal to make with you. I want to know where to find Luigi Rosselli—right now."

The prisoner was silent. Reynolds produced a large roll of yellow-backed bills and laid them on the table.

"There is five thousand dollars," declared Reynolds. "Tell me where I can find Rosselli and the money is yours. In addition to that, we'll take you several hundred miles from Chicago and put you on a train for any place you want to go. If you refuse we'll turn you over to the cops and swear

that we saw you throw that bomb into the restaurant across the street—and we'll find Rosselli, anyhow."

The prisoner's gaze met that of Reynolds for a moment, then wilted and fell.

"Rosselli is at his gambling-house on Halsted Street," gasped the wounded gangster, adding a street-number. "He will be waiting for our report."

"Good!" cried Reynolds. "Now we'll give those wrists of yours a little first aid. While we're doing it, you tell us how to get into this joint where Rosselli is waiting. Then you can stay here with Swede while we go and have a little settling-up. If you tell us the truth, and we get in without any trouble, you will have the money I promised you and be on your way in a very short time. If you have lied to us, Swede will start you toward the hereafter *pronto*. You'd better come clean."

"All right—I will!" groaned the gangster.

JUST a few minutes after eleven o'clock an auto halted at the curb on Halsted street not far from Madison. Four men alighted from the car. They were Cliff Reynolds and his comrades—with the exception of the one who had been left behind to guard the wounded gangster. They slunk down an alley between two buildings, and paused before a door above which shone a dim electric light. On the panels of this barred door Reynolds beat with his knuckles a peculiar tattoo which had been taught to him by the wounded gangster. A peep-hole in the door opened and a voice spoke from beyond the opening.

"Who is it?" asked the voice.

"Anthony," answered Reynolds, using the password the gangster had given him.

The door opened and Reynolds leaped forward, to press the muzzle of a revolver into the midriff of the astonished doorman.

"Dick," hissed Reynolds, "watch this bird and keep the door open in case we want out in a hurry. If he makes a funny move, snuff him out."

Leaving Dick Mattson behind with his gun boring into the middle of the doorman, the other three hastened up the flight of stairs before them and burst into the pool-hall and gambling-den that was Luigi Rosselli's headquarters.

Cliff Reynolds led the invaders and his eyes fastened on a thick-set, swarthy man who stood at the end of a table near the center of the room. Cliff had taken pains to search for pictures of the gangster in the back numbers of newspapers—and he recognized Rosselli instantly.

"Come here, Rosselli!" barked Reynolds.

The black eyes of the gangster sought the speaker and his hand darted toward his armpit. Reynolds reached for his gun, but before he could grasp his weapon, two guns in the hands of Rusty Pangborn were belching death. A startled expression spread over the face of Luigi Rosselli; then the gang chieftain sank to the floor in a heap.

"Cover the crowd, Rusty," commanded Reynolds. "I'm going to get that rat's carcass."

At half-past eleven a taxicab driver, cruising along Halsted Street, was hailed by a group of men. All seemed more or less tipsy and all were in the best of spirits. They were carrying the limp form of a comrade who seemed to have passed out from too much hooch. They piled into the taxi and gave the driver an address. At their destination they paid their bill and went into the building, still carrying the limp form of their defunct companion.

About midnight, a policeman found the lifeless body of Luigi Rosselli lying in an alley almost directly across from the little Blue Teacup Restaurant, which had been bombed less than two hours earlier. The police counted it a good job and were not overly interested in finding the man whose gun had laid the notorious racketeer low.

THE following morning Cliff Reynolds stood talking to Alberta Massey in her modest room on West Ontario Street. He was trying to make love, but his success was nothing to brag about. Suddenly the girl took matters into her own capable hands.

"Mr. Reynolds—Cliff—are you trying to ask me to marry you?" she demanded, placing her hands on his shoulders.

"You guessed it," confessed Cliff.

"Silly," laughed Alberta, "I've loved you ever since that first night! Of course I'll marry you. Where do we go from here?"

"We're going back to God's country," answered Reynolds, "and settle down—"

"Once and for all, Cliff," smiled the girl, placing her fingers over his lips, "don't kid me. You'll never settle down and I know it. You're just naturally cantankerous, and you must get into trouble every so often to be happy! I'll never quarrel with you about it—only please try to keep from getting killed!"

"I'll do my dangdest," promised Cliff, as he folded her into his eager arms.

Savage Paradise

By ADAM SADLER

The Story So Far:

"ADVENTURES," said Yuan Pei-fu when I hesitated to join that sailor-of-fortune MacGrath, "are to the adventurous." That stung me; I had justified my loafing about the Suhiti and the neighboring islands by a small job as correspondent for a London paper. But this chance to sail with MacGrath on a mysterious mission for the wealthy Chinese merchant was not to be missed.

Adventures came: on a dark night we landed on a certain island and brought away three big packing-cases; and we fought off a determined war-canoe that sought to stop us afterward. One prisoner remained with us—Totuma, a young native prince. And the tale he told caused us to open the packing-cases—to find, in one of them an island girl, a princess, drugged and unconscious.

She was revived at last—and scorned Totuma, who had risked his life to save hers. We brought her and our story to old Yuan Pei-fu—and learned that the European governor had tricked Yuan into arranging the abduction of the girl for him. He had committed offenses almost as bad before; but we undertook to stop his doing it again. Concealing ourselves in the packing-cases, MacGrath and I had ourselves delivered to the Governor, and punished him with a branding-iron; and Yuan used his great influence to have him removed from office. This done, MacGrath and I set forth on a second and greater adventure for Yuan—the discovery and return to our employer of a certain statuette known as the Celebes Fisher-boy, said to be in the possession of Chief Oturi on the island of Paramata. *(The story continues in detail:)*

THE first news I received at Turamati was not pleasing, though a month before I should have hailed it with joy. There was a letter from my sister announcing that she would pay me a visit, accompanied by a fierce globe-trotting aunt. Their passages had been booked already in the *Barralong*. Would I meet them at Singapore on the twentieth of July, failing cable instructions to the contrary? They were going to honor me with a stay of about a month.

Ito, delightfully cool in his white shorts and scarlet tunic, nibbled the stalk of an hibiscus and watched with patient amusement as I tore at a calendar and calculated dates. One thing was certain: only by a miracle could I get back from Atapu in time to meet them at Turamati, much less make the run to Singapore.

In common decency I ought to cancel my trip. The thought made me thoroughly angry—mainly, I believe, because I wasn't too certain that this was not just the excuse I needed. But what to do otherwise? I could cable that I should be away, with the certainty that thereafter there would be no necessity to communicate with my family ever again. The only alternative was to find a substitute to do the honors till I could get back. Even that would probably cause sufficient offense.

Copyright, 1930, by The McCall Company (The Blue Book Magazine). All rights reserved.

A hand reached over his shoulder like a striking snake. The revolver was snatched from his grasp.

A far voyage on perilous waters, bitter battle where shore and jungle meet—and a dramatic climax to this colorful novel of the South Seas.

Illustrated by
W. O. Kling

"Women are the curse of this world, Ito," I remarked bitterly.

Ito was just twenty and he knew then more about women than I shall ever know.

"That, Tuan, is as a man permits."

O thrice blessed East! But my hide was white and my heart without courage.

So I had a day's ride inland to MacAndrew's. MacAndrew played at being a planter, but actually he rested from the labors of a life largely misspent in Sydney and Melbourne. His rest was watched over by a stout lady hailing from the bleak country somewhere behind Mallaig in the highlands of Scotland, a lady whose acid tongue and very practical head had been nicely balanced by a large soft heart. It took her, I think, only ten years to extract MacAndrew from business with a fortune to keep them in comfort for the rest of their days.

I spent a day with MacAndrew, lean, sandy-bearded, dour, with the glint of humor always at the back of his blenched gray eyes—a day being mothered and teased by his wife. Together we worked out the *Barralong's* ports of call, finally drafting a cable to catch her at Port Saïd.

Not only would MacAndrew meet my relatives, but Mrs. MacAndrew would go as well, and when I mentioned the matter of expenses, they nearly threw me out.

"Expense—expense!" old MacAndrew growled, sucking at his black and broken pipe. "Man, d'you realize it's five long years since I found a legitimate excuse to visit any white man but yourself? Can you guess how many years it is since I had the chance to exchange blinks wi' any white woman but Morag here? Expense!"

"Yes, and it's glad enough I'll be to talk woman's talk to a white woman again," Mrs. MacAndrew added. "And glad enough too to see white men other than chicks like yourself, Mr. Matheson; but if it's not a secret, what play is it that's so desperately important you can't wait to see your own sister?"

Her eye said plainly what she thought, but why in heaven's name should I flush? They rocked with laughter, and the more they laughed, the more confused I became.

"There really is nothing in it," I protested. "I'm going on a trip with MacGrath—that's all. You know Mac."

"Ay, fine; and I know that any job he takes up wont last long and wont be any better than it has to be. Why should you miss a visit from the sister you haven't seen for years to risk your neck running round with Mac?"

"I'm not risking my neck."

"If you walk with MacGrath from this side of the room to yon, you risk your neck. A trip with MacGrath!"

"And where'll MacGrath be dropping you?" Mrs. MacAndrew chortled. "To give the crazy loon credit, he hasn't a reputation for running after the fair sex."

"I tell you—"

"Aye—and what's the gossip the boys

produce this morning about a new governor, and MacGrath and Yuan Pei-fu mixed up in the messy business? Was your hand in it too, Matheson?"

"I may have known something about it," I murmured.

"Well then," MacAndrew commented, his bearded face settling to sudden gravity, "you're a fool, and the sooner you forget all you know about it the better. Politics are ill things to meddle with, and politics translated to the Sultry Straits are hell. I'd sooner stand up to the devil himself than to that fat fox back in Suhiti. He has jackals in every island in the Archipelago."

"But if he's no longer governor?"

"It means that he has no interest to cover villainy even with the forms of decency. Did he know you were in it?"

"I'm afraid so."

MacAndrew solemnly rubbed the bowl of his pipe up and down the side of his nose.

"A man's responsible for his own corpse in these latitudes, but you're a home plant. I'm thinking on the whole you may be safer with Mac."

I laughed at him, but he was more than half serious. I had some difficulty to avoid being provided with an escort for my journey home.

Here Ito was waiting for me with letters. There was nothing of importance except a hasty scrawl from MacGrath:

"Better look out; the dog is vicious. Come over as quickly as you can."

It had been a hot ride, and I was tired. I bathed and toweled angrily while Ito moved about the dining-room on the other side of the passage. Why in God's name had I not left MacGrath alone?

I FELT better when I had placed between me and my discontent an excellent dinner. Seated on my broad reed-roofed veranda, with a pleasant breeze floating up from the sea, with coffee and liquor on a tray at my elbow, I was almost inclined to think kindly of MacGrath again.

I stared lazily over the cliffs to the quiet sea. The harbor was spangled with riding and steaming-lights in white and red and green. From far below, the murmur of the surf rose sleepily. From the cliff road beyond my hedge of hibiscus and bougainvillea, came occasionally the scuffle of bare feet in the white dust, the murmur of lovers' voices as the brown children tripped by on the way to the bathing beaches.

GOD in his mercy must have pushed me down. I bowed my head to pick up a two-months'-old newspaper; and as I did so, the vicious hunting cry of steel sang over me. I felt the wind of it stir my hair. Flat on my stomach, I crawled back to the doorway, and calling Ito, I explained what had happened.

He slipped out and returned a moment later with a short-hafted throwing spear which he had found buried deep in the stout upright against which I had been leaning.

"The Tuan has an enemy," he remarked calmly, but with a respect he had never before bestowed upon me. "The boatman talk of midnight shootings at Suhiti; there is a new governor, it is said. It is always a mistake, Tuan, to let a living enemy out of your hand."

"It's a mistake I sha'n't make again, Ito," I said. "Tomorrow morning I shall be leaving for a long trip. We must arrange."

"It will be well that one of the household accompany the Tuan abroad," Ito murmured. The islanders are born intriguers and born fighters, and the light in the boy's eye told plainly which member of the household he would select for the job.

"Bad luck, Ito," I said. "There is a house to be prepared for visitors against my return. Listen."

WE spent an hour legislating for the unexpected and unwanted family. Then for the good of my soul I went to sit in the veranda for half an hour, fortified with a whisky and soda, and I stuck it out till I could retire decently to bed.

In bed I couldn't sleep at first. I started up at every voice passing on the road, at every soft click and creak as the jalousies swayed to the sea breeze. Finally, at the stealthy scrape of a foot in the hall outside my door, I crept from my bed, revolver in hand.

Silent, a step at a time, I reached the door and flung it open. Ito sat cross-legged on the mat, naked but for a strip of linen about his middle; in the light of the candles his body glistened with grease.

He was sheepish, like a boy rather too old for the game who has been caught playing soldiers. Kati, the stableboy, he mumbled, was playing soldiers too under my window. More grateful than it was policy to admit, I went back to bed and slept till the tropic sun burst into the room bringing Ito, clothed and calm as usual, to my bedside with a cup of steaming chocolate.

THE ferry journey across to Suhiti was not a happy one. I scanned every white man about the decks and kept my hand constantly on the revolver in my pocket. I watched every colored man on the lower deck and exercised considerable tactical skill to insure that I was never within knife-throwing range of any likely-looking assassin. Ashore at last, I jumped into the first gharry to hand and hounded the unfortunate boy to Yuan Pei-fu's wharf. With luck I should find MacGrath there.

MacGrath was leaning over the bridge-rail smoking a cheroot and supervising the stowage of cargo. As usual he appeared to be devoting more attention to the cheroot than the cargo, but—also as usual—the stevedores sweated mightily. He waved me an off-hand salute and went on speaking quietly to somebody down in the hold, as I ran up the gangplank and onto the bridge bursting with news.

He finished his argument with the foreman of the stevedores, and then his blue eye smiled a lazy welcome.

"Had a good time?"

"A good time!" I cried. "I've very narrowly escaped being murdered."

"Get him?" he asked equably.

"Get who?"

"The assailant of whom the police have no clue."

"No—and I didn't try," I answered, feeling myself flushing under his quizzical eye.

"What did you do, O civilized man?"

"Damn it," I cried desperately, "in plain English I fell on my hands and knees and crept into the house. I'm a blithering ass, MacGrath. Have you had any trouble over here?"

His thin brown hand, deceptive of its iron strength, dropped on my shoulder.

"I told you you were free to get out of this if you liked," he said, "but I'm afraid you're in it too far for comfort. Yuan is carrying an arm in a sling. I've missed, and only just, two knives in three days. Madame Elise, poor soul, is dead."

I bowed my head to pick up a newspaper; as I did so, the vicious hunting cry of steel sang over me.

"Dead? How?"

"Doctor says heart failure."

"And Yuan?"

"Kanaka tried to stab him as he walked out of his office. Yuan is the only Chinese I've met who can shoot. He was too quick, and too deadly, to get any explanation."

"And you?"

"They've only tackled me with long throws in the dark. I sleep aboard now, and we warp out into the bay every night and run regular sea watches."

"And damn you, you like it!" I groaned. "I wish to heaven I could."

"It'll grow on you," he chuckled. "It's like dope, you know. Without meaning to in the least, you end by looking for trouble for trouble's sake, and life gets stale if you can't feel you've got it on the toss of a copper. Where's your kit?"

I told him, and he gave instructions to Tuala to have it fetched aboard.

"Now you're here, we'll pull out tomorrow morning," he said. "I've an idea the place to fight Da Suza is Atapu, and the sooner we get close to him the better."

YUAN we found behind his great blackwood desk, imperturbable as ever.

"Adventures are to the adventurous, Yuan," I murmured with a nod at his bandaged arm.

"There is a man who is perhaps considering that aspect of the matter at this moment in the outer courts of paradise," Yuan smiled. "Have you escaped attention, Mr. Matheson?"

"Not quite," I replied, aping as well as I might the unconcern of himself and MacGrath. "A spear half an inch out might just as well not have been thrown at all."

"True," Yuan smiled. "The savor of the salt of life is not tasted till that life hangs on your skill as against the other man. There will, I think, be salt of a high savor and to spare presently."

Ship's papers were brought in by Wohfen, and the talk became purely commercial.

They came to an end at last, and when the underling had bowed himself out, I asked: "Is your man of business entirely to be trusted, Yuan?"

The master looked long at me, inscrutable black eyes seeming lifeless in his ivory face.

"No man is entirely to be trusted, Mr. Matheson," he answered at last. "Any son of woman, and more certainly any woman, given the circumstances and the psychological moment, will betray the nearest and dearest. One woman has betrayed me—men have tried to betray me. All are dead."

The laugh of MacGrath, the incalculable, fell quietly athwart the taut silence, and Yuan Pei-fu's eyes lit and his teeth flashed a smile. "Always right, my friend," he said. "The gods, who laugh, love laughter and not tears. If the time comes that we differ seriously, which of us will die?"

MacGrath shrugged.

"We will talk about it when we are nearer the point. We sail with the tide at dawn."

CHAPTER VII

DOUSED lights again, but this time on the western coast of Atapu—and, we prayed, with nobody to meet us.

A moon had come and gone since our last visit, and the great stars swung in the velvet dark, their reflections dancing and streaming in the oily wash of sea. With speed dropped to dead slow, the beat of the engines was a scarcely perceptible throb, and as we passed the unseen heads of Paramata estuary, MacGrath took the wheel himself with Totuma at his elbow. Tuala watched in the bows, and the crew lay at stations under the bulwarks.

We expected no trouble yet, for Paramata town was ten miles upstream. We had covered our tracks well on our voyage north. There was little danger of anyone's looking out for us, and the few outlying fisherfolk whose huts we might pass, hearing the beat of our engines in the dark, would be more than likely to lie half dead with fear till dawn could reveal to them the monster whose heart beat so loudly in the black night.

Yard by yard we crept up against the black greasy flow of the stream. The banks closed in until we could discern against the sky on either hand the suggestion of a line of lesser darkness outlining the tops of the tree-covered hills.

Once or twice the *Emma's* bow swung quickly away from half-seen obstructions in response to the piercing undertone of Tuala, and at last we came to a stop.

"It is enough, Tuan. There is room to anchor here. Between here and Paramata is no room."

MacGrath sent a signal by muted bell to the engine-room. The engines stopped, and the anchor went down rumbling.

"Well, that's that. We've room to anchor, but we've no room to turn, without grounding, anywhere short of Oturi's private harbor, so we might just as well pretend we like it."

"There is something enticing about it," I said.

"Beginning to like the taste of Yuan's salt, eh?" he laughed.

As we passed aft to the cabin, we were pulled up by the faintly discerned torso of David Llewelyn Jones protruding from the engine-room hatch.

"You no tell him that we was for bloody war this trip, look you, Captain!" the engineer protested.

"I'm not sure that we are," MacGrath answered. "I hope it's just showing the flag to a friendly foreign power."

The half-caste spat down into his pit.

"And when Oturi see your *sacré* flag, him commit suttee on your blasted boat—yes, look you! God be merciful! What of us Oturi no put to swords, he beat to plow-

shares. I think so, blast him! No in contract, Captain. No in contract for Chief Engineer David Llewelyn Jones."

A light passing in the engine-room below glanced weirdly up over the scraggy torso to the hook-nosed emaciated face. His eyes seemed to flame wickedly, and his teeth gleamed.

To me it sounded as if the son of the errant elder and the light-mannered princess was at the point of mutiny—another example of my lack of knowledge of the denizens of life's seamy side.

"Shall we put it in the contract now, Chief?" MacGrath asked casually.

A wheezy cackle developed in the leathery abdomen of David.

"Might be more legal, Captain, I think —yes. But look you, he that taketh up the sword shall perish by the arrow that flyeth in the noonday."

"Yes—that's awkward. Better leave it out of the contract, perhaps."

"There would be a bonus, Captain. Dives —even a *verflüchte* Chinese Dives—would spare a bonus—yes."

"Double pay from now till we tie up at Suhiti docks."

David swabbed his grimy face with a handful of grimier waste.

"Then shall we lead captivity captive—hell, yes. Steam in the hoses, Captain, and God shall look after the widowed and the fatherless. Bless my soul, yes. Good night, suh."

"Heavens—what a beauty!" I laughed, as we went down to the cabin.

"The best engineer and one of the toughest fighters in these latitudes," MacGrath defended. "Never touches a drink at sea; but if he's not killed first, he'll die in D. T.'s some night ashore."

A TRAY was set on the cabin table, whisky and soda for us and sherbet for Totuma—now full-fledged pretender to the throne of Paramata and studiously treated by MacGrath to princely honors.

The nightly conference was one of the forms of respect to royalty. Indeed there was never anything to arrange, because MacGrath had decided to land alone if we weren't attacked before he could get ashore. Both I and Totuma had protested, but MacGrath countered that we could scarcely attack the town, and we would get nowhere by waiting for Oturi to attack us.

I didn't see where we would get to by MacGrath's landing in the face of a whole kingdom, to have his throat cut. I protested again while we sipped our drinks.

"I don't believe you've got the ghost of a plan in your head. Trotting ashore like that is just crazy braggadocio, which is the negation of generalship."

"Thus the leader-writer! I wonder how many soldiers and sailors have been forever damned by people who never heard a gun fired, but had a happy knack of slinging words together in a pattern that fat stay-at-homes like to roll off their tummies after breakfast, after lunch and after dinner! Seriously, it's not so crazy as it looks. The last thing old Oturi will expect will be to see me trotting ashore alone. Once I can get him talking, I can get him negotiating, and if we can get to that, I may find the alleged whites and the idol."

"And if Da Suza is there?"

"He wont be; you can bank on it he's with Atukava at the other end of the Island."

"And L'lalla?"

"Is it likely she would risk going back to Oturi yet? The old viper must realize that she was in the plot for her abduction."

WE ran over the final instructions once more. I was to remain in official command of the *Emma*, with Tuala in actual command. All we had to do was wait for MacGrath, to fight for the ship as long as we could do it with reasonable hope of success—to head to sea and run for it if that was the only course to save the ship.

"And no slops," he added with a sudden hardening of face and voice. "Once I'm ashore, if the ship is in danger, I don't exist."

He turned to Totuma, who sat sipping sherbet, the hilt of his kris carefully covered in the folds of his sarong.

Totuma's position must have been about as irregular as any pretender's has ever been. He was recognized as Rajah of Paramata by Yuan Pei-fu, who had never seen Paramata state or even the island of Atapu. He was recognized by MacGrath, who was paying his first visit to Paramata and his second to the island, and who had so far out of two visits seen no sign of land.

For this time it looked as if Totuma would remain a pretender, for MacGrath was there for the fisher-boy idol and the white girl, but he had undertaken to steal him at least one islander. There was, he said, no precedent for an exiled prince without at least one devoted follower.

While they talked island politics in low voices, I turned my ears unhappily to the unaccustomed stillness of the anchored ship. Sounds which had been part of existence for weeks had ceased; there was nothing to fill their place but the oily whisper of the river mouthing and fingering at our scarred sides, chuckling wickedly as it slipped stealthily and swiftly down the road to the sea.

On a sudden the dull throb of drums broke the silence. There was a scuffle of feet on deck, and I turned at the startled exclamation of Totuma. MacGrath rose lazily but with a wry face.

"That means Oturi knows and is passing the fiery cross. By tomorrow morning the fighting men will be out and the feudal chiefs will be sweating themselves sick to get down in time for a share of the loot."

"Why the deuce must you present him with twelve hours' notice?" I asked peevishly. "You could have run upstream at dawn and been alongside his jetty before he could have stirred a finger."

"And can now," MacGrath answered. "He wont do anything tonight, and we shall call tomorrow a lot earlier than he'll expect us."

He pulled thoughtfully at his ear, listening while drum answered drum.

"I hope there isn't going to be any unpleasantness," he murmured. "The climate in this valley is too damned enervating."

Totuma, his eyes gleaming, took ceremonious farewell. MacGrath got out a map, quite imaginative except for coastline and the details he had filled in himself in consultation with Totuma. There would, I knew, be no more speech from him for an hour, and I went up to the bridge, where I bestowed myself comfortably in the chair of the commander.

The rolling of drums seemed to have spread to all points of the compass, radiating from the central roar of the capital a few miles upstream, where a crimson glow, waxing and waning against the night sky, showed where watch-fires were flaming a warning. Paramata was not getting much sleep that night, and I knew at least one man on the *Emma* who had no expectation of sleeping in comfort again till the beat of the ship's engines and the wash of salt water round the bows should provide a lullaby.

The native crew sat about on the forehatch discussing the situation in husky whispers, and presently I heard the acidly protesting voice of the ship's grumbler.

"It is not well. All the world knows that Atapu is accursed and that Paramata is cursed above all in Atapu. The drums are calling now to those who will pick our bones tomorrow."

And from somewhere in the shadow came the raucous pipe of the old serang.

"What of it, crab? Did the stars at your birth promise you should affront daylight forever?"

"*Tidak*, Tuala! But why should honest men die thus, one against a thousand, for no cause shown except that the Tuan Kapitan is mad?"

"And how should a man die?" Tuala sneered. "Wait till his belly burst with a double ration of rice? Or till his wife's voice drives him under the sea?"

A decorous murmur of amusement applauded the sally, for the grumbler was noted for his appetite, and on his own showing on many a starlit night, was married to a scold.

"*Tidak*, Tuala! But whose quarrel—"

"The quarrel, if there be a quarrel, is the Tuan's. When I was yet young, and ere you were born to a world grown tired of breeding men, the quarrel of his prince was every man's quarrel. We did not talk of death, even when death laid his fingers on our shoulders."

"*Ya*—it is true," I heard another voice. "In those days men were men. Now you wear trousers and duck from your own shadow on a still sea. Your women talk while you do the housework, and when honor is offered, you murmur of death."

"But the odds," Kassib grumbled on.

"What odds?" Tuala asked again. "Is not the Tuan Kapitan equal to all Paramata—to all Atapu? And will you count us as equal only one to a hundred of those bush rats. Why, even the Tuan Matheson, who writes upon paper and is not of the sea, will drive them like pigs. *Tchut!*"

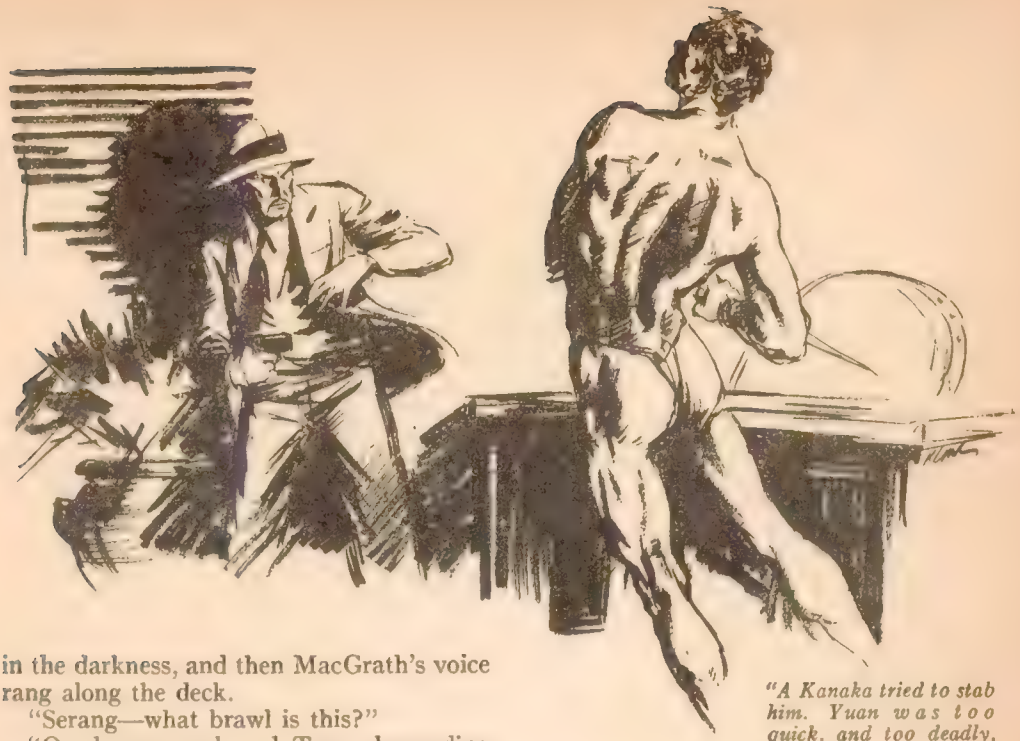
EXCLAMATIONS of amazement and alarm broke up the conversation, and my heart jumped as a woman's voice rang out sharp but low:

"Hands off, and lead me to the madman who brings a ship to Paramata and keeps no watch."

In a savage whisper Tuala called his son.

"Tavi, you bat, I will flay you alive for that insult! A woman has come aboard under your eyes. My face is black before the Tuan forever."

There was a sound of terrific pommeling



"A Kanaka tried to stab him. Yuan was too quick, and too deadly, to get any explanation."

in the darkness, and then MacGrath's voice rang along the deck.

"Serang—what brawl is this?"

"One has come aboard, Tuan, demanding speech."

"Aboard, without leave given?"

Tuala groaned. "It is true, Tuan; the shame is on my house."

"The shame is on the ship, Tuala. Your son for the rest of the voyage works in the stokehold. Look to it."

That was the secret of his grip. Apparently easy-going, even lazy, at the psychological moment his tongue was ready with the word or his hand ready with the blow. As the sentence was spoken, Tavi groaned and fled to the engine-room hatch.

"May I come down, Captain?" the unseen woman called in English.

"Are you alone?"

"Quite—and my hands are empty."

"Come down."

I slipped from the bridge and followed her into the cabin.

SHE was twenty or thereabouts, clothed in a blue-and-white-striped sarong, and with native sandals upon her feet; but she was English from the wild tousle of her brown hair down every strong, graceful line. She was of medium height, with large expressive brown eyes; but her lips, beautifully formed, were spoiled by a harsh contemptuous smile which she wore constantly.

MacGrath rose and bowed her to the settee, but she shrugged her brown tanned shoulders in rejection of the courtesy.

"In an hour I may be missed. What have you come for? You have heard the drums. If you wait till sunrise, the war-boats will be here."

MacGrath smiled. "The etiquette of these visits is that the Rajah waits at home till his visitor arrives. At sunrise I shall dip my flag before the more or less watertight palace of Paramatan majesty."

"Yes—it will be easier for the Rajah there."

She seemed to gloat over our fate; but watching her under the subdued light of the cabin lantern, it struck me that her look of bitterness sat ill, that she was aching to be pleasant; but that past experience or perhaps only a youthful pose kept her from being natural.

So we stood. At least, the visitor and I stood. MacGrath found a bulkhead, and, molding himself about it with one long arm hooked over a convenient bracket, he smiled across at the little bitter brown face.

"At least you expected us and had the goodness to call. I sent no notice of my visit."

"Oturi knew from Da Suza and L'lalla. Picked lookouts have been kept posted for weeks; and the moment the word came, I slipped down to see what manner of fools you might be."

MacGrath inclined his head to the insult,

"I had not calculated that either Da Suza or L'lalla would be welcomed by Oturi."

"They aren't—they are at Boanga with Atukava; but they hate you enough to pay off old scores if they can. What have you come for?"

HER tone was an insult. It implied that we were thieves. Her bearing confirmed that she reckoned herself in questionable company.

"We came partly to help you," MacGrath smiled, "—that is, if you need help, of course. Partly, being civilized men among savages, we came to see what we could loot. As time presses, suppose you tell us about yourself."

She had a sense of humor, that child, and it almost reached the surface. Her eyes flickered in answer to the lazy cheerfulness of the skipper, but she repressed the gleam.

"I am Rajah Oturi's slave, and my father is his slave. You, I suppose, are like the others who came."

"I don't know, child. Were they pretty awful beasts?"

"A Captain Smith wanted to help. He blundered because he was afraid, and Oturi took him and his crew."

She drew her hand across her throat in a gesture whose grace warmed me and whose callousness made my flesh creep.

"Pedersen, the Swede, would have helped at a price, but he was red and fat and toothless, and I would rather end my days with one of the chiefs."

Her reason was delightfully naïve. We both laughed, and her eyes flamed.

"And what happened to Pedersen?"

"He drank Oturi's coffee and died in great pain. His men died more suddenly and with less noise. There was much loot in the ship."

"Well, at least neither of us is toothless, nor red; and as to fat—discounting a tendency in that direction of Mr. Matheson—there is nothing to complain of. Incidentally, child, we have not mentioned a price. What can we do?"

"You have come for the idol," she said. "Da Suza wants it too. He has tried to buy, and L'lalla has tried to steal. Why do you want it?"

"Lady, we admit nothing. What can we do for you?"

She flung up her hands suddenly and backed to the companion.

"You can do nothing—unless you can beat Oturi, which is not possible. You might be honest—you are certainly fools. We shall see."

She fled, and MacGrath stood for a minute looking after the flying feet.

"Who on earth can she be?" I marveled. "That face and that accent, even with all the Malay mixed up with it, belong to a drawing-room."

He looked at me thoughtfully, rolling a cigarette in his long fingers.

"So that's what happened to Pedersen and Smith," he said slowly. "Pedersen was posted lost in a hurricane off Borotra, and Smith they misplaced as far as the China Sea. Queer place, the Archipelago!"

CHAPTER VIII

IN spite of my nerves I must have slept pretty well, for it was MacGrath shaking my shoulder that at last recalled me to a dank chill world. The stars still reigned, but dim now, through a rising curtain of white mist which condensed like rain on tropic clothing. As we started upstream, the first hint of dawn touched the hill-tops.

A mist thick as wool lay all down the river, blanketing everything to the height of the bridge weather-cloth. It was a wonderful sight, as the sun leaped over the edge of the world. We moved to the low beat of engines like a phantom ship through clouds. Only the green of the tree-tops was visible to us as the banks widened away. We steered by the directions of Totuma, posted high in the shrouds.

We had only Totuma's word that we had entered Oturi's bay, but the crash of drums and gongs announced that we were in front of his stockade.

It must have been a queer, eerie spectacle for those watching ashore. Two stumpy masts swinging swiftly in a wide arc, the throb of engines, the roar of the anchor-chain, and then silence. In the forbidden city they had had few visitors from the outer world—and these Oturi had poisoned, or slit their throats.

We stood blindfolded by the mist while the tumult died ashore, to be replaced by more purposeful sounds—shouted orders, the clash of weapons, the clatter of paddles thrown into war-canoes. Then the shore wind came in earnest. The blanket of mist rolled up and fled seaward, and Paramata town lay before us a few hundred yards across the shining water.

It was like most capital cities of the

island rajahs of those days. Straggling lines of palm-thatched huts strewn along the river-bank clung desperately to the shore from which the encroaching jungle threatened every moment to push them. Its waterside stockade of spearheaded uprights and heavy lateral timbers was in better condition than most, but its only other distinction was that it had a more permeating and nauseating stench than any other town I had ever visited.

By the time we got our view, the whole male population was on the water, from the Rajah in his great barge to the youngest warriors who could muster a twin-paddle canoe. As we swung to our anchor, a wild shout of derision rang up and down half a mile of water front, and the rays of the new-risen sun were reflected from hundreds of waving kris and broad-headed spears. The sun's rays were reflected, too, from a large brass cannon in the bows of the Rajah's flagship. I drew MacGrath's attention eagerly—not to say nervously—to this formidable engine, but he was undisturbed.

"I only wish he'd fire the damned thing. He and his infernal barge would probably go straight to the bottom and save me no end of trouble. —Tuala, lower my boat."

The serang paused just the fraction of a second, his aged brown eyes peering up into the childlike and serene blue. His ragged wisp of beard quivered upon his working jaws. He shrugged his shoulders, and turning away to obey the order, called upon his grandson.

"Tuhoti, the Tuan goes ashore, Since your father is not at hand," (poor Tavi, as he well knew, was glaring through the engine-room grating), "the honor is yours."

I had protested till I was weary, at Mac's methods of campaigning. All I could do now was to wring his hand and wish him luck as he stepped down the ladder.

"Remember, no firing till you hear from me," he said. "If I go ashore, let nobody aboard till I come back. Jones' hoses will keep your decks clear."

"And if anything happens to you?"

I had asked the question a dozen times before and had my orders. But come to the point of parting, and with my gaze on the savage horde lining the shore, the question slipped out again, and, I suppose, upon a melodramatic note. His eyes became solemn, and his voice shook.

"Tell them at home how I died," he murmured. He was gone before I realized that he had pulled my leg, as the saying goes.

THE dinghy pushed clear, Tuhoti paddling with an oar over the stern, his long spear upright in its socket carrying the red pennon with the clawed yellow hand which was our house mark.

It was a sight to remember—the tall slim figure in white trousers, and a singlet which exposed bare strong arms as brown as a native's. There was a revolver in the holster on his belt, but he stood in the bows of the little boat, bare-headed, hands on hips, moving toward a shore black with savages who had never yet let a white man slip their fingers.

A grunt of amazement ran up and down the shore as the boat left our side, and then there was dead silence while it headed slowly for the royal barge. Tuhoti rested on his oar just outside spear-throwing range. There was some talk which we on the *Emma* could not hear, but we saw MacGrath extending his hands, and after a minute or two, the barge turned to her jetty with MacGrath's boat paddling in her wake. The water lane closed behind them, and the two wings of the Paramatan fleet came quietly forward till we were completely encircled.

I was still gazing fascinated after the white figure disappearing in the wake of Oturi up the rough pathway to the palace, when a voice gasped at my elbow.

"By hell and by heck, look you, Mr. Matheson, that fellow Cap'n allee same bugs!"

I turned to confront David Llewelyn Jones, as he switched to a pulpit boom. "There was a man of Damascus possessed of seven devils—bugs, bats, *atcha!*"

It must have been a shaft of tropic sun searing the back of my neck, added to my fears for MacGrath, which drove my natural politeness down the river after the mist.

"Shut up!" I shouted.

His jaw fell open.

"Eh?"

"Shut up," I repeated. "Stand by your hoses, but for God's sake don't talk."

As I turned to watch the shore again, he fell a pace behind me, and we settled down to wait with what patience we could for some sign of MacGrath.

CHAPTER IX

OTURI had been so taken aback by the serene recklessness of MacGrath that he had not collected his wits by the time the

dinghy drew up to the barge and MacGrath, proudly as from prince to prince, demanded audience. Incidentally Oturi heard a murmur of admiration running among the ranks of his young men, for of all virtues the Islander rates courage highest.

Oturi, like most despots who sit uneasy thrones without the sanction of heredity behind them, was finding his position less and less easy as the years stiffened his arm, added inches to his girth and dulled the bright edge of his wits. More than one minor chief had presumed recently to question the wisdom of his decisions; and as despots will, he had fallen back on a sort of Prætorian Guard and maintained his position thus far by the kris where that would serve, by poisoned coffee where it might appear more discreet, and above all by balancing one jealousy against another. For Oturi had no sons in spite of many wives, and a title to property was worth something, even though the property had been stolen.

Wherefore Oturi, crossing his great arms over his barrel chest, glared at MacGrath with little, deep-sunk, perplexed eyes.

"For what have you come? It is known that I will not have white men to rob my children."

MacGrath had learned from Totuma all there was to know of Paramatan and Atapuan politics.

"Yet you have a white man and a white woman in Paramata already, Oturi. They have robbed no man."

"There is no sin without opportunity. You come with a ship."

"Because I could not swim the distance," MacGrath answered, while a little gust of polite amusement ran round the nearer war boats. "Also would I come to such a prince without the means to carry presents?"

Oturi's little eyes twinkled greedily.

"If you bring presents, it is but to steal treble their value. All white men are so."

MacGrath smiled. "That is to prove. Does it look like an evil conscience that I stand here empty-handed at the mercy of so vast an army?"

"True—true," somebody murmured, and Oturi's eyes flamed.

"Heads that are wagged by too loose a tongue shake off in a little breeze," he snarled. Turning on MacGrath, he added: "If you have courage and a clean heart, follow me. We will talk."

At his shouted order the clustering canoes backed water frantically and the barge swept round. Landing, MacGrath strode up the rough path in the Rajah's wake, and Tuhoti followed at a respectful distance, carrying upright in his hand the long spear with the pennon—poor Tuhoti, sensible of his honor, walking with the hint of a swagger as became the follower of a king.

It took some little scuffling to set the scene for audience, but at last Oturi was seated on the rough dais with his old men at hand, and his guards clustered in a half-circle behind his back. MacGrath stood alone on the main floor of the hall with Tuhoti leaning on his spear behind him. On the veranda and about the wide door assembled every man, chief or warrior who could conscientiously escape the duty of watching the *Emma*.

Oturi's grunt proclaimed the audience open; and MacGrath, dropping his sleepy pose for a moment, extended his hands.

"I come in peace."

There was a pause while Oturi's wicked little eyes ran from face to face. The breath whistled through his nostrils. His thick lips sucked in and blubbered out.

"*Selamat datang!* In peace abide!"

MACGRATH knew treachery was intended, before the formula was well out of the Rajah's mouth.

"You don't come for nothing," Oturi grumbled with heavy amiability. "No white man ever does anything for nothing."

"As you will, Oturi. I come as a friend. Trade if you want trade. You have an enemy who is also my enemy; he is the friend of Atukava of Boanga. He stole L'lalla and tried to steal something more precious. If he made common cause with Atukava, the war would be heavy for a man without friends."

Oturi puffed out his great chest to withstand the hammer of his leg-of-mutton fist.

"Against Atukava I need no help; I drive him into the sea when I am ready."

"And yet you don't drive him," MacGrath answered quietly. "I have heard of certain exactions—unreasonable claims to ground—unreasonable thefts of fishing rights—and what they took they kept."

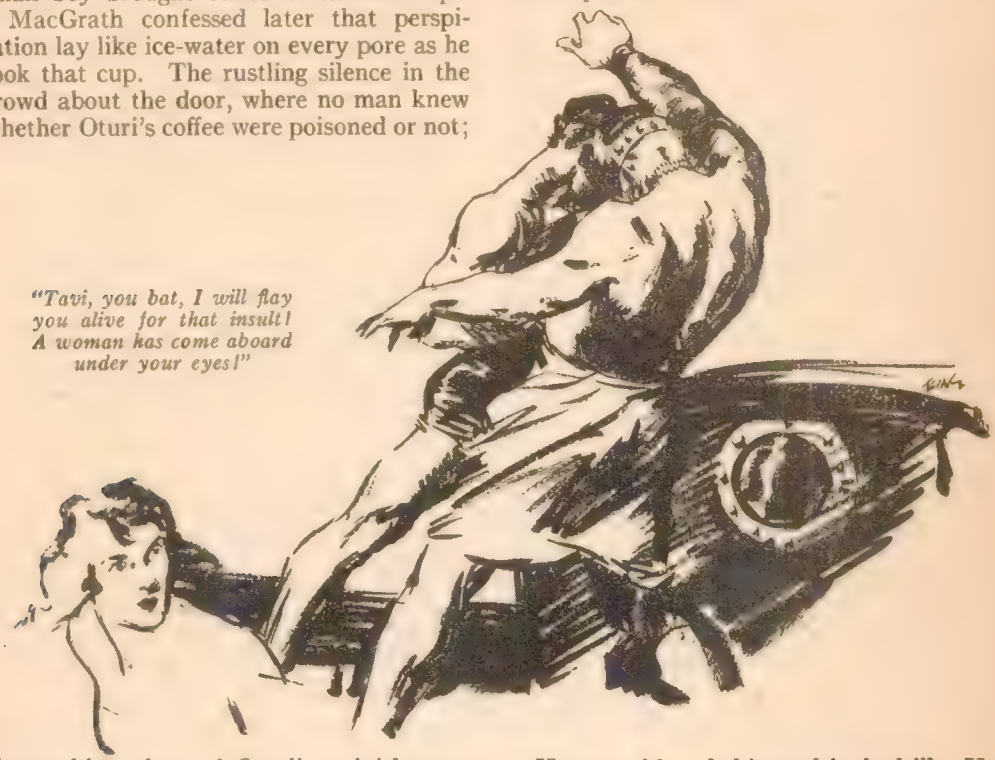
The murmurs of approval at the doors, and even from among the chiefs at the potentate's back, did not escape him. The pulses in his thick neck beat, and his hands closed hard on the arms of his chair, but his reply was quiet.

"You know much of what happens here—some would think more than could in

honesty be known by one whose face we have not seen before. But let us drink coffee and talk like friends."

A bench was brought for MacGrath, for quite obviously he was not going to squat on the floor while Oturi sat in a chair. A small boy brought coffee in earthen cups.

MacGrath confessed later that perspiration lay like ice-water on every pore as he took that cup. The rustling silence in the crowd about the door, where no man knew whether Oturi's coffee were poisoned or not; the probing glare of Oturi's swinish eyes, was enough to wreck the strongest nerves.



"Tavi, you bat, I will flay you alive for that insult! A woman has come aboard under your eyes!"

But that mad sailor did not falter, scarcely paused. Giving Oturi look for look, he made a careless salutation with his cup and drained the contents to the dregs. While he swallowed, every muscle was tensed to resist the stomach cramp of poison biting home, but ere the gasp of admiration could die about the doorway, he flashed a smile of appreciation.

"It is good coffee. If a guest may ask without discourtesy—"

The lad refilled the cup from a different beaker. He drained the second cup, and as the minutes passed bringing no pain, the perspiration dried from his forehead, and lounging at ease in his chair, he continued his talk with the Rajah.

IT went on interminably, as these interviews will. Oturi was striving to find out what loot the *Emma* contained; MacGrath fenced, looking for the Rajah's weak spots. Now and then the Rajah would turn for a muttered conversation with councilors at his back. One of these went out to return a few minutes later with a white man—the white man MacGrath had been looking out for, but different from what he had expected to see.

He was old and thin and looked ill. He was clothed entirely in white, a great roll of cloth swathed about him with patriarchal effect, an effect heightened by the straggling gray locks and the long white beard reaching almost to his waist. He came up the hall, bearing in his hands—the Celebes Fisher-boy! And as he came he mumbled what sounded like an incantation. He stopped every few paces to bow his head as if in whispered consultation with the image.

The looks of the prætorians gave hints of amusement. There was something like chuckling among the spectators about the doors. Oturi stood up as the old man dropped on one knee, took the little image from his hand and set it carefully on the broad arm of his chair. There was a muttered conversation between priest and potentate. The white man stood up to stare at MacGrath and came down from the dais extending his hand.

MacGrath gripped his emaciated claw.

"It's all right; don't get flurried," he said, for the other was visibly trembling. "Take it easy; I'll have you and your daughter out of this in a day or two."

The gray-beard bowed stiffly, and his eye looked almost anywhere except at MacGrath.

"You are good, but you are also mistaken," he tittered. "Here I have my duties by my protector and the god. If you get yourself out, it will be sufficient. My daughter and I are among friends and need no help."

MacGrath, watching the quivering old face with some perplexity, realized that the thin partition which stands at the best between sanity and insanity had in this case been rather holed. It was a complication.

HE turned back to Oturi, who was speaking again, and immediately he perceived that the crisis was come and that a minute or two might decide many things.

Oturi, whether emboldened by the proximity of the image, or enraged by the murmuring sympathy of spectators of the coffee episode, had decided to make an end and proceeded to goad himself to the necessary pitch of fury.

He started quietly enough with a homily on the vices of white men in general; and MacGrath, lolling on his bench negligently, slipped his revolver into his lap and covered it with his folded arms. Oturi was working his furnaces up nicely.

"And of all white men," he snarled, facing the sailor squarely at last, "you are the worst. You say you come in peace and your ship is full of powder. It is—I know it. *Diam-lak!* I know what is behind closed doors; I know what is done under the sea; I know what is in the hearts of men—I, Oturi."

He paused to glare at his prætorians and the crowd about the doors. He had the satisfaction of noting the disquiet of his own subjects, but from MacGrath he extracted only a lazy smile.

"You have been here before," he burst out again. "In the dead of night you came, and you have spoken to some in this hall who shall suffer presently. You came in the dark, but to me the dark is nothing. I saw you, and I saw those who spoke with you."

His great corpulent brown body, running with perspiration, swayed backward and forward; he was even beginning to believe in his own omniscience, but also he was sending a roving eye round the hall to look for faces to betray themselves of previous acquaintance with MacGrath.

"You stole L'lalla, my slave," he roared; "you comforted Totuma, my rebel; you attacked Da Suza, my friend. You have broken the peace, and your life is forfeit. —Guards!"

The thick lips fell open, for MacGrath had moved his left arm, and had uncovered in his steady right hand a long-barreled revolver. Behind that ugly weapon his blue eyes had taken on a glacial look, though a faint smile played on his lips. The dark ring of the revolver-muzzle stared unmoving at the Rajah's forehead.

"If the peace is broken, Oturi, Allah receives not me alone, nor receives me first. Let us talk like men."

Oturi sat rigid, his jaw fallen and his little eyes bulging. A sigh went whispering among the watchers. MacGrath knew that, holding Oturi pinned, he had but to say the word, and he had a kingdom in revolt.

But before he could speak, a white hand reached over his shoulder like the head of a striking snake. The revolver was snatched from his grasp. Oturi roared in triumph:

"Take him alive—alive, and he shall die at the appointed time!"

The sailor heard the insane chuckle of the white man and the battle-cry of Tuhoti. Then he went down under the smothering weight of the charge. When he stood up, with a dozen spears leveled at his breast, Tuhoti and the old man lay still.

CHAPTER X

TUALA'S aged but eagle eyes were the first to note the disturbance about the palace, and when presently men with naked blades in their hands came rushing out, the worn old body shook as with a palsy.

"Aye—art thou gone, Tuan?" he choked; and then as MacGrath's figure showed white among the crowd making its way to the shore, he pulled himself upright and glanced sheepishly out of the corner of his eye, hoping that I had not witnessed so unsailorlike a display of weakness.

MacGrath was surrounded by warriors. Only his head and shoulders were visible as the party trooped down to the landing.

Tuala peered and muttered.

"I do not see Tuhoti, and the Tuan does not walk so in freedom. It is not well."

I dashed into the chart-room for field-glasses, which showed things to be far from well. The group spread out at the water-side. I saw that the sailor stood between armed guards, his arms fast bound behind his back. The Rajah stood a pace away gesticulating violently, evidently demanding and threatening in vain; for MacGrath, even bound, managed somehow to get into a comfortable attitude, and I could see as plainly as if he stood on deck the occasional negligent shake of the head which was all his answer to Oturi's vehemence.

Llewelyn Jones emitted a torrent of horrible profanity and sprang onto the rail. His great feet clung apelike about the white scrubbed wood. Swaying there, he looked like a tattered scarecrow fastened to the rail by its feet and blown grotesquely about by a stiff breeze. His gutter abuse swelled suddenly into the pulpit bay, and his voice boomed across the water.

"Thus saith the Lord, behold I will kindle a fire in thee and it shall devour every green tree in thee. The flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein. Yes, you—sons of guns!" he ended in a snarl.

I stood spellbound while he boomed, but he swayed suddenly out over the water, whether to dive or not heaven knows, but I grabbed the slack of his trousers and hauled him inboard cursing as volubly as he could have done himself. The crew pattered up and grouped themselves about us, pointing to MacGrath and bombarding Tuala with a storm of questions.

"Ay," Kassib grunted. "Did I not say no good could come of this?"

"And if you say one other thing," Tuala blazed, "your liver shall go overboard and you shall follow it. Are you Bugis of the blood or praying dock-rats? To quarters!"

IT was time. As the abashed warriors drew away, a great puff of signal-smoke wafted up from the group ashore. The whole circle of war-boats turned bow on, and made toward us. And clear across the water we heard MacGrath's far-carrying sea voice:

"Tear 'em! Tear 'em! Yeigho!"

They came yelling like madmen in a wild race to be first aboard. Jones took the nozzle of the port hose and I the starboard, while the crew lined the rail to cut down any who might come to hand grips. Tuala opened the cocks as they came within striking distance. A stream of steam and boiling water sprayed the amazed leaders. Many were carried under our counter by the momentum of their rush, and the sight of the others backing water in their efforts to get out of range amused our crew almost beyond the island decencies of laughter. For me, my sense of humor was not uppermost that day.

It was all over in five minutes. There were a few empty canoes left floating on the water, and a number of badly blistered warriors swam painfully toward the shore. One or two of our crew, envied by their fellows, wiped the blades of spears which had accounted for overeager leaders in the assault. Totuma, cleaning his kris fastidiously with a piece of rag, nodded to me haughtily as became a prince who had drawn first blood in the fight for his throne.

"They go, Tuan," the old serang shouted, pointing shoreward, and snatching up my glasses again, I watched the Rajah's party mounting once more the rough road to the palace. They were in an unpleasant humor, which was not to be wondered at, and there was some scuffling in which MacGrath must have been roughly handled, but the bush about the trail constantly obscured the view and I could not be sure of anything.

"Reckon that blink-blanked Rajah him bit off one piecee more than him can chew," the engineer grinned.

"I hope that's it," I answered, "but if he has gone back to take out his temper on the Captain, what are we going to do about it?"

Totuma was all for landing. Indeed he was at the point of mutiny—to the extent of inviting the crew to accompany him whether I would or not. David Llewelyn Jones, gnashing his yellow teeth, would have supported him in the enterprise.

"Captain MacGrath isn't dead yet," I told the engineer sternly, "and if he were dead, his orders hold."

"Reckon him better alive, one piecee Cap'n disobeyed, than with his head in a tub," the insubordinate half-caste retorted.

"Do men leave their lord to die without blow struck or hand lifted?" Totuma demanded gloomily. "If the Tuan die, then for my honor's sake must I die too."

"It is a good word, Totuma," I soothed him; "but the heart should listen to the head. To me it seems the quickest way to insure the Tuan's death is to land on that coast without men enough. What is your thought, Tuala?"

"I think that no harm will befall the Tuan while the ship is safe. Oturi may try to force the Tuan Kapitan to give the order—perhaps by starving, perhaps by torture; but while the ship is held, the Tuan will not die. Perhaps there may come messengers from Oturi. I think we can only wait. There was an order of the Tuan Kapitan. Who disobeys that order disobeys me."

HIS bony hand stroked the hilt of the kris tucked in the roll of his sarong. Defeated, Totuma stalked away and Mr. Jones leaned over the rail, a volcano suppressed, bubbling the lava of profanity.

An hour before noon a canoe put off from the shore. It had but one paddler. As it drew near, an old man stood up in the bows, holding his long skinny hands above his head.

"This is the word of Oturi," he cried. "Your chief has broken the truce. He has drunk coffee under my roof and slain my servant before my face. Therefore his life is forfeit."

"You're a bloody liar," Mr. Jones commented, his great scarred hands knotted on the rail. A touch, and he would have gone over. David Llewelyn Jones was in urgent need of somebody's blood. Apart from his natural fighting instincts, he had been leading a sober life too long.

"This is the word of Oturi," the bombastic herald went on. "I am the lord of a thousand spears, but I love peace."

"And you don't like hot water," the half-caste snarled.

"For heaven's sake, hold your tongue," I cried. "Let the fellow say his say and go."

"Well, say something yourself then, Mr. Matheson," he growled. "You can't let the damned swine have it all his own way."

The messenger rambled on and on, but from all his flowers and flourishes we made out at last that MacGrath, to buy his life from Oturi, authorized us to hand over the whole of our cargo. We were to allow workers to come aboard at once, and when the last bale and the last keg had gone, MacGrath should be free.

Totuma stood at my elbow.

"Today or tomorrow that man is my slave," he murmured. "Let me speak."

I nodded, and Totuma stepped forward to the rail. His appearance had an immediate effect, for the swaggering self-confidence of the herald oozed out, and he scraped with his feet unhappily on the bottom boards of his rocking boat. Totuma had developed an air and a tongue since the night he stood dripping and foaming under MacGrath's eye in the lantern light.

"Have you learned the squeal of the pig from the keeper of pigs, Tembi?" he asked haughtily. "Tomorrow there shall be left nothing to you and your master but that squeal. Thus says Totuma, whose father ruled your father, and who tomorrow shall rule you and Oturi the swineherd."

"Nay, Totuma. Am I guilty that for my life I must still serve where you have served? I have given the word of Oturi, and there is but an answer to take."

"Take you a message to the headmen and to the true sea-rovers who still live in Paramata. Tell them that Totuma—"

The old man held up his arms.

"I take no message, Totuma. I love you, as you know, and others love you—but the spear is in the hands of Oturi. All the devils fight on his side. Now Atukava and the powerful one from Suhiti will be his friends, and we can but wait the mercy of Allah."

"You shall wait the mercy of Totuma first, and Allah shall judge you very soon after, Tembi."

"It is as Allah wills. I will hide from Oturi that you are here, and even for that my life is forfeit."

Totuma shrugged and turned to me.

"For these—they have been under the heel too long and only blood will loose them. If you have any message for Oturi, let it go."

"Tell Oturi," I said, "that we shall know we have the orders of our Tuan when we have his word written upon paper. We will talk of cargo when the Tuan is safe on his ship again. If one hair of the Tuan's head is injured, we will burn every house in Paramata and crucify Oturi over the ashes of his palace. Go now—we speak no more with Oturi."

THE air along the river bed was like the steam of a Chinese laundry. The crew lay under the thwarts or leaned over the rail staring despondently at the shore or at the guard boats which lay like strings of black dots across a sea of quicksilver.

Totuma sat in the doorway of the little deck-house which had been allotted as his quarters. His head was sunk on his shining copper chest. He refused to see me when I paused at his side. I went to the

bridge and stood watching the shore for some sign of life. Tuala padded from the deck to the bridge and back again till my taut nerves would hardly bear the shuffle of his feet along the almost smoldering deck planks. Jones had gone back to his engine hatch. Ensconced again like a clinker-colored devil, he honed a long knife and fingered its edge from time to time lovingly with a broken, spatulous thumb.

AS the day wore on the last breath of air seemed to be sucked out of the valley. The sun took on a coppery tinge and flaky wreaths of mist appeared from nowhere all round the horizon. There was no sign of breeze but cooler strata of air moved here and there, bringing no relief, but only a momentary unpleasant shuddering chill between the blistering skin and the dripping garment.

A dirty dun-colored curtain of mist drew itself over the sun. Tuala paddled up to the bridge once more, cocking weather-wise old eyes at the sky and sniffing the air.

"The thatch will leak tonight, Tuan. No man will watch, and there will be only lightning to uncover us in the dark."

I had one flash of hope ere misery shut down blacker than ever.

"The Captain's care was for the ship, Tuala."

The old man stared shoreward for a minute or two in silence.

"Where many might be discovered, one man might go safely. When dark comes let a trustworthy man swim ashore. He can make report even if he can do no more."

It was doing something—however feeble. I could imagine MacGrath's fleeting smile at the thought of sending somebody "to make report."

"Who shall go?" I asked.

"Tuhoti, Tavi's son, I think is dead, Tuan. Tavi's would have been the honor, but for a fault he works in the firehole. The son's death might atone for the father's fault, Tuan?"

He peered at me wistfully, waiting my word for the propriety of allowing the defaulting lookout the honor of risking his life, balancing nicely the sin of the momentarily wandering eye against the sinner's loss of an only son. It required my emphatic word finally to tip the balance in Tavi's favor.

I had trouble with Totuma then. He was urgent to go himself, either alone or accompanied by one or two men. He became angry and talked of his rights as Rajah of Paramata. He was dealing with Matheson, who wrote upon paper, not of the sea. I got him tamed at last with the shadow of MacGrath and we waited, praying for darkness and rain.

An hour before sunset the circle of warboats was broken up. The greater part of them pulled back to the jetty where their crews dispersed. The others drifted downstream to take post where the fairway was scarcely a boat-length wide, to cut off our retreat to the sea. They went silently, sunk in the awful listlessness that blanketed the world, and our crew squatted on their hams about the decks, watched as listlessly, their hands hanging limp between their knees.

A line of cloud appeared above the hills inland. It swept up and swallowed the falling sun and far away upstream, moaning and sighing about the jungle-smothered peaks, we heard the vanguard of the storm. A few great drops of rain pattered on deck, lightning seared a jagged line across the black cloak of the heavens, and then a peal of thunder, caught between the hills, hallowed and crashed.

NIGHT came, and with it rain that beat like hammers. The whole round earth was rocking under titanic blows. Nothing could stand it; the world must fly asunder!

But Tuala dragged me down to the shelter of the deckhouse where Totuma gracefully gave us the invitation to enter.

"Tavi is ready, Tuan."

"But it is yet early," I protested. "It will be hours before they sleep ashore there, even if they sleep at all on such a night as this."

"The sooner he is ashore the better," Tuala grunted. "Allah knows what there may be to do and it is dark enough to kill."

I looked at the naked figure of Tavi, shining like a bronze statue in the light of the deckhouse lantern. His brown eyes had pain in them, for Tuhoti was his only son, but behind the pain was the light which burns out pain. He carried a long knife, handy either for throwing or stabbing and tied in a waterproof parcel about his waist was a revolver and ammunition for MacGrath. Without knowledge of the situation ashore I could give him no instructions. I bade him be careful and his sharp white teeth grinned wickedly.

"I shall be careful, even as the Tuan and Tuhoti have been careful."

With that he slipped his knife between

his teeth and jumped on to the rail. With just a second's pause to gain poise, he dived into the roaring black void. In the crash of the storm we couldn't hear him strike the water and in the pitchy dark it looked as if a devil had reached an invisible hand to drag a chosen victim down.

There was nothing else to be done, and I went below to change my wet gear and eat.

BUT it was to be a night of surprises, and my first came when I had scarcely finished supper. It was the white girl. Tuala showed her down and she stood before me with her streaming sarong clinging about her shapely form like the drapery of a statue. Her brown hair hung over her bare shoulders in thick wet ropes. Her eyes were dark pools of torment in her brown face, and I knew without being told that something noisome had happened.

She said nothing at first, just stood staring at me with dark tragic eyes while the water dripped and trickled about her feet.

At last, bluntly, brutally, she forced out her tidings.

"Your captain is a prisoner. My father betrayed him. My father is dead, and—I am glad."

I took a step in her direction with an exclamation which might, I suppose, be interpreted as anything. She backed away from me till a bulkhead brought her to a stand.

"There—there must be some mistake," I stammered. "But you must get something dry on first. If you—"

She waved the suggestion aside.

"There is no mistake. Oturi meant treachery from the beginning, but your captain was ready. He would have won, but my father, standing behind his back, took the weapon from his hand. The servant killed my father before the guards could move, but the boy himself was dead before he could strike again."

She flung up her head defiantly, but her courage gave suddenly, and burying her face in her hands, she burst into a storm of sobs.

"Father was mad," she choked through her tears. "I didn't know. I have seen so few white men—he was mad."

I reached out to touch her hand. She sprang aside as from the threat of steel and lifted a tear-stained face in which her dark eyes shone like stars.

"My father betrayed your friend. My life is yours, or his, if it can pay."

"Is Captain MacGrath safe so far?" I asked. "Quite safe," she retorted; "he is lashed to a stake in Oturi's compound!"

Poor child, she had not known enough of whites to see anything incongruous in the offer.

"There is no question of payment," I told her. "A trustworthy man is ashore now; when he comes back we shall know how to act. Is Captain MacGrath safe so far?"

"Quite safe," she retorted with bitter irony. "He is lashed to a stake in Oturi's compound. Runners have been sent to Da Suza and Atukava. Da Suza, it is said, will give all the wealth of the world to have the Captain in his hands. Oturi will sell for the best price he can get if he can restrain himself till the others come, or if your Captain is not already dead from standing bareheaded in the sun."

My flesh crawled at the thought of what would happen to MacGrath if once he fell into the hands of the ex-Governor. What would the infamous beast do in revenge for that branding? For the loss of his place?

"Merciful God," I groaned, and stood

looking like a fool at the girl who had fallen senseless at my feet.

CHAPTER XI

THE storm was still at its height when Tavi came to the shore where the war-canoes lay bottom-up under the perfunctory protection of a few quaking and half-drowned guards. Tavi was an organizer as well as a fighting man. He selected a canoe which, lying already half in the water, was easy to float unnoticed. This, swimming cautiously, he pushed a safe distance upstream, where he ran it under cover of an overhanging mangrove. Having made the canoe fast, he began a tortuous ascent to the township.

The rain was falling in torrents, drowning all sounds, and driving every guard into such shelter as the miserable huts afforded. There was no question of sentries or of any effective watch being kept on the *Emma*. It was sufficiently obvious that we dare not attempt to move the ship in such weather. To the native mind, it was even more obvious that any attempt to attack the shore with a view to rescuing the prisoner was quite out of the question.

With each flash of lightning Tavi lay flat on his face, looking like a glittering hummock in the glittering slime. In the intervening spells of cavernous dark, he wriggled forward on his stomach till he came at last to the outer compound. Once, thrusting forward he found his face pressed against a hairy hide. His hand went up to strike, but he had ready wits, and the smell of Paramatan pig is not easy to mistake. He closed up to the animal, scratching its dripping flank and murmuring words of endearment above the deserts of swine, till the hog rolled over, grunting sleepy content.

Coming at last to the compound proper, Tavi began to crawl round under the stockade till a lightning-flash revealed MacGrath bolt upright against his stake. He was stripped to the waist and the rain slanted from his blistered shoulders. The rain had saved his life for by the time evening came he had lost consciousness twice. Had the night gone on in the sweltering heat normal to the valley, he would have been past helping. But the torrent roaring down on his fevered skull had wrought his cure. It had quenched his thirst too, and but for the aching stiffness of every muscle, and the emptiness of his stomach, he was so far little the worse for his experience.

At MacGrath's feet one dejected sentry

sat doubled over his spear and almost completely buried in a pile of rush mats. Tavi's heart began to sing fiercely, for here within reach of his hand was the first soul to answer to him for Tuhoti.

HE began to crawl forward, but it was not for nothing that he had learned the art of war at old Tuala's feet in the days when trousers were not a man's wear. Once again his brain took control when a less intelligent warrior would have trusted only to his knife. Was that sentry there for a night of penance, or would he be relieved presently?

He slithered back to the stockade again and waited. It was just a chance, but he was justified of his caution. He had scarcely waited five minutes when a man came muttering his grievances through the dripping dark. The form under the mats clambered up.

"Does he live yet?" the new guard demanded, hoping that death had intervened to save him from an uncomfortable spell of duty.

"*Ya,*" the other grunted. "He is of the white race as our fathers knew them in the old days. They can be killed only by their own strong drink. Had Allah deigned to rain gin, he might have been dead by now."

Chuckling at his own witticism, the old guard departed, slipping and stumbling over the greasy obstructions of the compound. The new man went close to MacGrath and pricked him gently with his spear.

"Ah—you live," he grunted as MacGrath winced. "Take the advice of one who loves not Oturi over-much: Pray Allah to take your soul before the dawn."

And MacGrath answered: "Loosen but one knot at my wrist, friend. You shall live and have honor and wealth when Oturi dies."

"*Aie*—but Oturi may live long."

But while the wretched man stood facing MacGrath, waiting for a lightning-flash to give him a sight of his prisoner, Tavi had been wriggling forward. He rose then, a blacker shadow on the dark, and struck home. Once would have sufficed, but the razor-like blade rose and fell three times before the body reached the ground.

"Go to Tuhoti and tell him I sent you," Tavi hissed.

"Good man, Tavi—oh, good man," MacGrath whispered. "Quick with these thongs."

When the lashings fell, he leaned against the stake for a few minutes, rubbing his wrists while Tavi massaged his legs. He caught his breath in gasps at the pain as the blood began to circulate again.

He clipped the cartridge pouch on his belt and slipped the revolver into his holster. Tavi took his wrist then to guide him to the shore. But at that point the islander had one of the most notable shocks of an exciting career.

The Captain's fingers squeezed his shoulder, and his lips tickled his ear.

"Keep close, Tavi—and make no sound."

"For a moment my heart was as water," Tavi said afterward, "but in a lightning-flash I saw the Tuan's eyes and I was afraid no more."

MACGRATH worked his way cautiously round the walls of the palace, pausing every yard or so to peer through the chinks in the bamboo uprights. They came to the guard-room. The prætorians on duty were mostly sleeping, but a little group of four still gambled in a corner, with silent, hard breathing intensity by the light of a dip.

Next came the chamber of some of the more trustworthy councilors, old men who lay huddled on their mats—all apparently sleeping—but all with an appearance of lying with one ear cocked for the call of their irascible lord.

They came to the royal lair itself. Upon a pile of skins in the farther corner Oturi, worn out by the alarms and perplexities of an indifferently successful day, exemplified the proverb of the heads and crowns. He tossed restlessly, muttering in his sleep. Weapons lay on either side of the couch within reach of his hands. At his feet, raised on a carved bench, stood the Celebes Fisher-boy. The light of two dips, screened by leaf shades, threw a flickering light on the image, so that in the play of light and shadow it appeared to nod and grin above the tossing form of its votary.

MacGrath, taking Tavi's knife, began to work softly but swiftly on the rickety bamboos.

Perhaps some instinct warned the sleeping Rajah that danger was near. He sprang screaming from his bed, seized a kris, and fled into the chamber of the councilors.

"You are thieves and liars," he roared. "You sell me to Atukava. You sell your father while you eat his bread. Tomorrow you shall die with the white thief—all—all!"

The councilors, bewildered with sleep,

crouched away from the circling steel, protesting wearily. The palace all about them stirred unhappily, from the guard-rooms to the women's chambers behind the grills. It was nothing new to them. Oturi, too suspicious to have guards in his chamber, too nervy in those days to disregard the dangers of assassination, treated his court to this kind of scene with fair regularity. Sometimes it was genuine nightmare; more often his alarm was feigned, probably on the principle that if he kept them sufficiently occupied with consideration for their own safety they would have less time and opportunity to conspire against his own.

"Nay, *Tuanku,*" one aged councilor snarled. "We serve honestly because we must, whether for love or fear. Allah bring sleep to you and us."

Oturi passed from man to man peering at the faces raised anxiously to his in the dim light. He went back to his own chamber then but paused to snarl a parting warning from the doorway.

"Remember I know what is in the hearts of men. I hear what is whispered in the ear of the singing girl when the curtains are drawn. I know what is said by a man's head to his soul when he is alone on the hill. Who thinks treason dies before his thought is clothed in words!" he roared.

He walked heavily into his chamber, pulling the buffalo hide curtain carefully behind him, and knelt grunting before the Fisher-boy. He bowed there for a while, but at last, lay back on his couch.

The lights went out as the palace twittered back to rest like a disturbed aviary, but MacGrath waited till the bubbling respiration of the Rajah guaranteed sound sleep before he moved again. Then, falling to work quickly, he had soon pried out sufficient space.

"Wait here," he whispered to Tavi. "If the Rajah cries out or makes effort to escape when he comes through—strike home."

Tavi watching with bared teeth and gleaming eyes, saw his master slip like a ghost across the room and land light as thistledown on Oturi's stomach. He saw the Rajah twitch once and then lie still while MacGrath whispered in his ear. Then they rose. Oturi came toward the hole in the wall, while MacGrath, who had caught the image up under his arm, followed close with the muzzle of his revolver pressed close to the skin of Oturi's back.

Tavi waited hopefully with his long knife held ready in his hand—but the Rajah, waking from sleep, had looked into MacGrath's eyes. He had had sense enough to recognize the smiling implacability of a genial fiend who would kill him with as little compunction as he had flung his own life into the scales that morning.

CHAPTER XII

ABOARD the *Emma* we were waiting for a sign. Mary Carthew had recovered from her swoon. She had been provided with a dry sarong. A meal had put new life into her body and new beauty into her face. Totuma, who had come down for such news as she might bring, stayed on at my invitation. As the hours passed without a whisper from the shore we discussed possibilities. One thing was pretty certain—Tavi could not have been discovered yet or surely there would have been some tumult. But it was long past midnight and soon a new day would uncover Tavi.

Tuala's voice rang down.

"Tuan—there are lights moving ashore."

We were up the companion before the words were out of his mouth. Lights were certainly moving. As we crowded the rail a roar of voices rose from the palace and spread east and west along the shore. Lights began to twinkle everywhere; flares were lighted and the noise swelled and swelled.

"They have taken more than Tavi—or lost more," Totuma said, and he added in a low voice staring across to the raging beaches: "May Allah back your hand and cover your head, O *Singa-Laut.*"

Singa-Laut—Lion of the Sea! It was a name that would stick.

A man cried out forward: "A boat—I see a boat."

Tuala, making a little whining sound deep in his chest, peered out into the gloom and the girl caught my arm.

The serang's voice rang out: "Who comes?" And out of the dark came the rollicking answer:

"Cooee, Matheson! Mix drinks and don't be too damn' lavish with the soda."

The Bugis sailor is not a demonstrative animal—emotion is bad form—but I think we were all a little mad for a minute till MacGrath's voice came again.

"Drop your gangway, Tuala. Are you a China junk—or have you shipped bushmen since the morning?"

And Tuala choked, "Allah be praised!"

ere he hurled the crew to stations with profane abuse.

The gangway went down, and two men with lanterns stood at its head. And up into the flickering light, where we had expected MacGrath, came first the little gleaming eyes, the heavy jaw, and the great ears of Oturi, Rajah of Paramata.

He paused at the sight of Totuma, who thrust forward in his path.

"So—it is treachery," he snarled, the veins at his temples swelling.

"Nay—it is justice come at last, Oturi," Totuma sneered. "Behave well, and you shall keep pigs in peace like your fathers before you."

IT was not a sight easily to be forgotten, the flickering light of the lamps, the circle of grim brown faces, in the midst the Rajah and Totuma eye to eye, measuring.

Oturi looked wildly round with his little glowing eyes, like an old boar seeking a gap in a ring of spears. Then he dropped on his knees at MacGrath's feet.

"Nay, Tuan, I have committed a very great fault. It shall be peace and trade—and you shall be my father."

"It shall be peace and trade, Oturi. Did you keep your father tied through the heat of the day to a stake in your compound?"

Totuma's laugh was unpleasant.

"How can he tell, Tuan, who never knew his father?"

Oturi leaped to his feet. He gave one terrifying scream of rage, and like an animal went straight for his enemy's throat. It was all over before anybody could move, for Totuma had his kris and Oturi only his bare hands.

Totuma asked pardon for the *gaucherie* of killing thus; then he wiped his blade on Oturi's loin-cloth and hid it again in the folds of his sarong. MacGrath stood a moment looking at the fallen potentate.

"Put him in the canoe," he said to Tuala. "The river will float him down to the guard at the narrows, and it may help their councils ashore. Now, Matheson, where's that drink? —Come down, Totuma. —Tuala, see that the crew feeds at once. There may be work for the spears at sunrise."

As we followed him to the cabin, Llewelyn Jones appeared in the lantern light.

"Crikee—oh, crikee," he cackled, but his style was utterly cramped by the presence of Mary Carthew. Even his boom, 'The Lion of Judah hath conquered!' was rather like a cracked bell.

MacGrath slapped his shoulder.

"Good man, Chief. Don't they say somewhere in the Bible, 'Beneath the hot waters of the *Emma* they lay down and wept'? Keep up a good head of steam."

And David Llewelyn Jones, cackling happily, fled back to his pit.

FOR myself, now that the strain was lifted, I was prepared to sleep where I stood, but MacGrath was a great deal less ready to conserve energy than usual. Having hastily hunted out a coat to cover his naked upper half he found a word of sympathy for Mary Carthew, but checked her effort to speak about her father with what seemed to me an unnecessary abruptness. Then he sat down to the meal the steward was hastily laying while we grouped ourselves about the meager accommodation of the little cabin.

"Now, Totuma," he began between mouthfuls of food, "Allah and your good kris have helped the cause well forward today. This morning I didn't expect to do more than spy out the land. Now I can spare a day or two to seat you on the throne of your fathers."

Totuma extended his hands. "Paramata is yours to take or give. Whether as Rajah of Paramata, or Totuma the landless man, I am your slave."

"You are my brother," MacGrath answered with solemnity. "They will soon get over their fright ashore there, and think of dividing the spoils. Who is likely to look for power against you?"

"Among the Paramatans I think none. But there are Oturi's guards. They are hated but they are feared. Who masters the guards has Paramata for his own in that hour."

"Oh, Tuala!"

The serang's prompt reply showed him crouched at the stair-head.

"Come down for rifles and arm the landing-party."

Tuala came scuffling down the steps, his lined copper face one blaze of beatitude, and dived under the table to the well where ammunition was stored. There were bandoliers ready with fifty rounds each which the steward passed up to the deck and then a dozen oiled and shining rifles were lifted from the racks.

"As marksmen they don't amount to much," MacGrath chuckled to me. "But their enthusiasm is immense and I reckon a long course of full meals and female ad-

miration hasn't done the nerves of Oturi's Coldstreams much good. Now, Rajah—"

"Look here, MacGrath," I said, "you're not having all the fun to yourself. I'm coming this time."

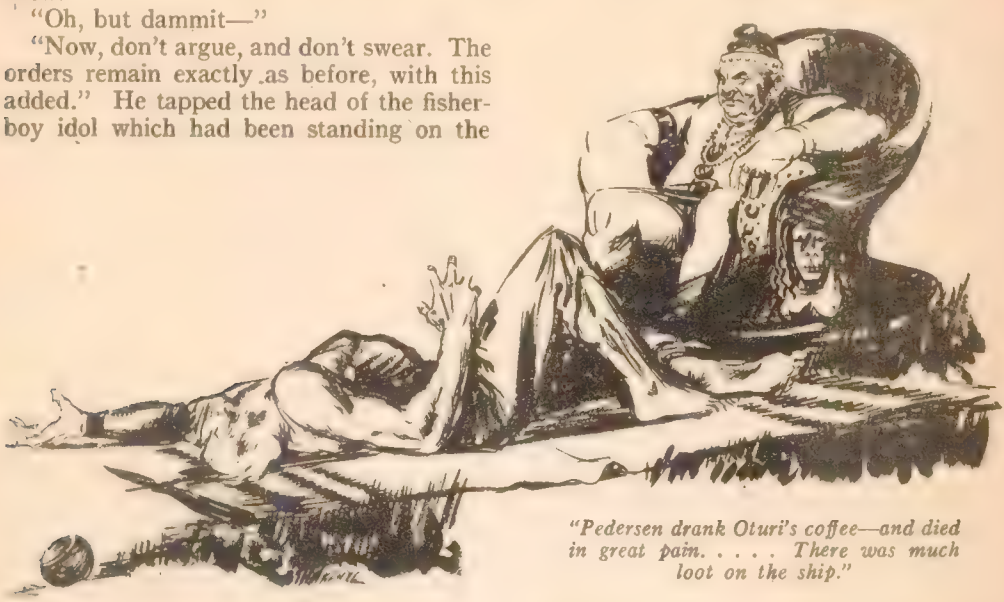
"You're not, my son. You're staying to take care of the good ship and Miss Carthew."

"Oh, but dammit—"

"Now, don't argue, and don't swear. The orders remain exactly as before, with this added." He tapped the head of the fisher-boy idol which had been standing on the table by him. "There will be no hope in heaven, and no release from purgatory, if this fellow's lost before Yuan Pei-fu gets his hands on him. Think of the unwanted girl children being born on the Yang-tse, and be good."

Tuala appeared again in the hatchway.

"Tuan, one Tembi waits outside throwing range. He speaks of peace."



"Pedersen drank Oturi's coffee—and died in great pain. . . . . There was much loot on the ship."

WE went on deck. The new day was breaking. The tops of the eastern hills were crested with dancing rosy light. Westward the last flying night clouds caught the glory in their skirts. The shuddering chill of dawn was in the air, and that sense of unreality which men feel in the first dawn hour when they intrude too soon on the respite God grants the wild from the heavy hands of humanity.

MacGrath's cheeks looked hollow above his unshaven chin. His blue eyes were tired but unsubdued. Totuma was much as usual. If I looked what I felt I was a sorry sight indeed. Mary Carthew—well, I had put a coat of mine over her brown shoulders as we came on deck. It was an attention to which she was not accustomed, and the glory of the rising sun was flushing her cheeks and dancing in her eyes.

MacGrath and Totuma went to the rail side by side. Tavi, who had found another pennon for his spear, fell in immediately behind MacGrath. Mary Carthew and I and Tuala grouped behind like a suite behind royalty. David Llewelyn Jones, more clinkery than ever, and chattering with malaria, came to affront the dawn.

Twenty yards away, resting like a fairy ship on a sea painted by a color-mad artist, lay the state barge of Paramata. On the raised platform between the two banks of paddlers stood most of the men who had on the morning before been Oturi's councilors. Tembi, their spokesman, bowed deep.

"Totuma, son of M'boti, we have come."

"Yes, you have come," Totuma answered, his voice crawling with contempt. "Yesterday you stood by while a Believer broke the oath of the salt. You stood by to watch the *Singa-Laut* trapped. You stood by while Oturi sent messages to Atukava. The *Singa-Laut* broke Oturi's chains between his thumb and finger. He carried Oturi from among you by the ankles as you would carry a hen. He brought under his armpit the graven image you feared even as Oturi feared. Totuma M'boti's son met Oturi face to face; has Oturi come back to you, Tembi?"

"Lord, he has come back."

"But not as he left. What do you come for, Tembi?"

"To place our necks beneath our lord's foot. Oturi's spearmen are shut in the palace. They fear to come out, but without a leader we cannot bring them out. If the Lord Totuma and the *Singa-Laut* do but breathe on them they die."

"And then?"

Tembi bowed, his lean arms hanging at his side.

"Our necks are beneath the heel of our lord."

"It is well, Tembi, and ye old men of Paramata. Justice you shall have and so shall every man. That which you gain with your hands shall be your own except the lawful dues. Your daughters shall be safe in your houses and your wives—even your young wives—shall sit safe by your side. But you shall remember that the law, whether the law please you or not, is Totuma's law. His tongue will be slower than Oturi's but his wrath will be as lightning to the dung-fire. I, Totuma, have said it."

EVERY one of those Islanders is a born actor. They love the limelight, whether in good or evil, to carry things with an air. If misfortune must fall let it be full measure, that all men may see that Allah has afflicted you beyond the affliction of ordinary mortals. If it be good fortune let it come publicly in a blaze of glory with flashing of spears and the bright-eyed admiration of the tribes. Above all things, eschew the safe paths of mediocrity.

And MacGrath was kin to them. For him too the only thing to be dreaded in this world was the safe humdrum path which should have led him home to the spacious paternal warehouses. He hadn't an atom of conceit in his composition, but he loved the publicity and forms of the palaver, the chance to carry off with an air whatever of opportunity the gods might send. I looked at Totuma and MacGrath standing side by side. The color of their skins was slightly different but in all essentials they might have been born of the same mother.

"Our lord has said it," the councilors boomed.

There was a pause while Totuma and MacGrath consulted in undertones. Then Totuma waved the barge away.

"Go you and prepare the people. Give warning to Oturi's slaves that if they have arms in their hands when I land they shall be laid down only by dead hands. If they submit, they and their wives shall depart to the villages unmolested. I come ere the sun has climbed a hand's span above the hills; I come with the *Singa-Laut* and many rifles. Allah be merciful to that man who stands against us!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE next three days were a whirl of ceremonial and high politics. In that brief space Totuma had taken his seat on the great carved chair and gathered the reins of government into hands shaped for ruling. Oturi's bodyguard, except for a handful whose private crimes could gain no mercy, had surrendered before Totuma landed. That handful fought with the careless ferocity of men who have to die, whatever the outcome. There was only Allah to be merciful, and before the sun of high noon they were not only dead but cremated too.

That night there was feasting and jubilation in Paramata. All night the fires streamed red along the coast, where men and maidens danced and sang of the days that had been and the wonderful days that were to be. All night messengers sped along the jungle trails and glow after glow, rising and falling red against the darkling sky, showed where another community had heard the message—the King is dead, long live the King.

No doubt discreet inquiry was made as to the amount of backing the new King had. Since the Islander has imagination, the size of the *Emma*, the prowess of Totuma and MacGrath, the awful accumulation of lethal weapons in the hands of the new ruler, swelled with every mile. To the victor the spoils! To the villagers lost in the jungle, to whom the change meant only a change in tax-gatherer, and no change in the tax, it seemed discreet to light the fires of jubilation.

An embassy was dispatched to Atukava in Boanga expressing sentiments nicely compounded of brotherly love and brotherly warning. It was pointed out that the lamented passing of Oturi made a visit from Atukava and Da Suza untimely. Some other day—but just at present a call would be peculiarly unfortunate. Long before we left, the councilors were hard at work numbering the people for war and labor, for MacGrath, the last of the king-makers, saw Atapu as one organized kingdom, paying tribute to the protectorate power if it

liked, but paying tribute to Yuan Pei-fu whether it wished or not.

Da Suza had fallen into the limbo of dethroned kings. It was a mistake, I thought, but MacGrath brushed my warnings aside.

"If he gets in my way, I'll deal with him. I can't be bothered with the old ox now."

A heavy cargo of rifles and powder and shot was handed over to Totuma. It was a magnificent gift but it would be paid for many times over when the trails were cut and the godowns built of which MacGrath in a lightning survey drew the plans.

It was a joy to watch MacGrath and Totuma stalking the trails of Paramata side by side. Totuma had developed a red turban and an ample green cloak. MacGrath wore a battered panama on his head and for body covering just a singlet and white ducks.

Behind Totuma, Tembi crawled, a subservient chancellor. Tavi stalked behind MacGrath carrying the spear and the pennon. Wherever they went men, women and children collected, bowing and smiling. Totuma was a king, MacGrath a divinity.

I helped MacGrath where I could, but he is not the kind of man one can help to any extent. I found myself more and more deputed to be the escort and companion of our guest. I didn't dislike it, even from the first hour.

Mary was beautiful. In those first days her light was clouded a little by the sadness of her father's tragic end, but the hardness which had marred her at our first meetings had gone and her sadness was shot with sudden flashes of humor that warmed my heart. She had an uncommon intelligence too, and learning of a curiously out-of-date sort. Her father could have been no common man, but she had been too young to know anything when fate tossed them on Paramata shore, and all who had landed with them had perished.

She was voracious for information of the manners and customs of the great white world. I spent hours pacing the tangled trails outside the settlement, or sitting in the starlight on the *Emma's* bridge, describing life in Suhiti and Turamati; my bungalow, my home in far-away England in a gray Cotswold village, where every stone and tile was mossed with history, from Saxon's camp which shadowed the fruit garden, to the long hill where a beaten Stuart had looked his last on the West.

Then came the night before we were to sail. MacGrath the indefatigable was ashore in final consultation with Totuma and a full council house. Mary and I had dined together in the cabin and had taken ourselves then to the bridge where the steward served coffee and left us to the gorgeous night.

On the left bank of the river the lights twinkled up and down. The right bank was a loom of jungle. High over the hills a silver of new moon glowed. Above our heads the velvet ceiling of the night was spangled with great tender stars. Owls were calling back and forth to the endless booming accompaniment of the toad's chorus. About the scarred sides of the *Emma* the river whispered and chuckled, as it slipped by on its way to the sea.

"Of what do you think, Mr. Matheson?"

A lantern, lashed to a mast bracket, shed a faint light on her figure recumbent in the deck chair, showed her big eyes fixed solemnly on mine, touched the beautiful dusky shoulders. My heart turned swiftly over in my breast, stood still for a moment, and then raced till I thought it must be heard on Paramata beaches.

"Heavens," I choked, "I have forgotten your rug, and you will be cold."

I fled down the gangway and into the saloon, where I sat down on the edge of my bunk to think.

MARY CARTHEW was a castaway. I had not thought much of what would happen to her when we landed, though the problem had lurked among the shadows at the back of my mind more than once. In those brief moments, resting on the bunk's edge, I saw her possible future with me.

On sober judgment I was crazy. Blame the moon and the stars if you must—blame the heavy tropic scents and the insinuating whispers of the river. I don't care. And if the point must be argued—admit I was mad. What man ever proposed marriage to a woman in his sane senses? Not one worth the name. If it were otherwise the one element of attraction—overwhelming attraction—would be missing. He would lose his sole extenuation for daring to ask another to share his risks and infirmities—to put up with the whole bundle of general cussedness which is man.

In any case the circumstances were not normal. I went back to the bridge without the rug, but with my mind made up. I appreciated that I had a desperately unfair advantage in the circumstances, and I decided that I was justified in using it.

There is in woman—savage or civilized, or the queer compound of both which was Mary Carthew—a strange compound of the abysmal and the shallow. As I stole to my place on the bridge her dusky eyes watched me. There was a twinkle of amusement on their surface and a light of something other than amusement in their depths.

"The rug, Mr. Matheson," she said softly, "was where you placed it for me, under my feet."

"That was very silly of me," I said; "but I really didn't go for the blanket. Mary—will you marry me?"

In the half light I saw the tears start to her eyes. Dropping on my knees beside her chair I took her hand.

"Please don't misunderstand," I begged. "I'm not what you must have come to think all white men."

She touched my lips gently with the soft fingers of her free hand.

"I know—I know—oh, how I know!"

"Perhaps it isn't fair," I stumbled on. "I ought to give you time to go out into the world and meet other men—to get your bearings—and—and—everything. But if a man wants a diamond for himself he doesn't rush to show it to all the world. A candidate for anything doesn't thrust all possible rivals forward first. I want the right to take you back to the world. If you give me the right, I hope God will deal with me accordingly if you have ever cause to regret it."

I felt the beating of her heart and watched the play of light and shadow over the brown tarns of her eyes.

"Take me, please—take me; I am yours," she said softly.

The blood throbbed in my temples and my breath caught in my throat, but a remnant of decency sent my lips to her hands.

For a long time we sat side by side, hand locked in hand. Bare feet passed occasionally on the deck below us. At intervals the call of the lookouts fore and aft marked the passing of the velvet-footed hours through the starlit dark. The lights ashore went out one by one till only the blaze at the palace remained. I sent her down at last.

"MacGrath," I said, "is empire-building or organizing piracy—I'm not sure which; but I doubt if he'll come aboard till it's time to sail. Good-night, my dear."

I had meant to be formal, but she came close. Her eyes were brighter than the brightest of the watching stars. Her arms went to my shoulders and her lips turned up to mine.

I kissed her then, frightened her a little I think, but I knew I had made no mistake. All the choirs of heaven danced and sang above the moon-touched hills inland.

I STAYED on the bridge till, with the first light of day, a war-canoe brought MacGrath alongside. He had been awake all night at the hardest job on earth, talking and drinking coffee, but there was no trace of weariness in his step or in his cheery greeting. He flung himself into the chair beside me with a sigh of content.

"You know, Matheson, if I had only a quarter of the sticking power of my old father, I'd be a merchant prince in a twelve-month. As it is I'll just get the thing beautifully going; then I'll get sick of the whole flaming concern, fall foul of Yuan, and go down to my uppers again. I can't stand money or respectability."

"You haven't a lot of either at the moment," I told him. "You're not going to fall foul of Yuan in a hurry, though; he'll stand quite a lot before he lets you go. Fixed up everything?"

"To the notch. Totuma is a true divine-right sort of king. Makes one rather sick to see him now, grasping with both hands for power and war and general gory fame, and to remember that in five years' time this will be the finest trade land in the Islands. Totuma will be old and fat and generally thoroughly wrecked by too much money, too much adulation and the awful knowledge that he can bluster, but a white adviser will say yes or no."

He stared wistfully out through the gray twilight toward the settlement.

"God, why must civilization ruin everything it touches? It's dreadful to think that this is really the last lone land in these latitudes, and I, MacGrath, who can't stand a collar and loathe all law like hell, am dragging it into the limelight for uplifters and general improvement societies to turn into a burial-ground for half breeds."

"You have got a conscience then," I gibed.

"I haven't—but sometimes I'm human enough to be sorry for my brother."

He laughed suddenly.

"Latest news of Da Suza is that he's got an engine breakdown in his battleship. I didn't say anything to disturb the peace of your little holiday, but I've been rather jumpy about the swine. Had sea-scouts and

"I ought to give you time to meet other men—but a candidate doesn't thrust possible rivals forward! . . . . . Mary, will you marry me?"

land-scouts out all the time. He might have raised the very devil if he'd held us at the river mouth as I think he intended."

My heart stopped beating at the thought of Mary.

"Are you certain he's out of action?"

"We'll get fair warning anyhow and now we're pretty certain to get a fair start. I wonder what he knows about our fisher-boy. He knows something for sure."

I didn't care tuppence what he knew about the idol.

"MacGrath, I'm going to marry Mary Carthew," I said.

Now, that is just the kind of occasion when the Scot comes through as a prince among men. With baser metal on one side he might have protested; on the other he might have been cheerfully humorous at our expense. He just reached out to grip my hand.

"Good luck, shipmate. I'll see you safely home," was all he said.

"We shall have a gorgeous time with the sister and aunt unless they've altered a lot from what I remember," I groaned after a lengthy silence.

I was just concluding he hadn't heard me when he said quietly.

"I'm captain here—every right to marry you. Love to have that much to do with it. You could fit her out with kit at Suhiti. By the time you meet your people, she'll be just Mrs. Matheson with only so much history as you like to produce."

"Lord, you're a brick!" I cried.

The sun made his tropical spring into the world from behind his ambush of towering green-crested hills. MacGrath stared into the light with blue eyes bright like a happy child's in his thin bronzed face.

"There's an omen for you, Matheson. Now a shave! You can't face your lady looking like that, and I must be spruce for the impressive ceremony of getting away with the loot."

WE went down the river in a blaze of glory. Totuma had worked wonders in those few days. The slovenly bush-rat habits of Oturi were gone. The sea-going pirates of the days that were passing were to have a last fling.

The state barge came out as we brought up our bow anchor. Her paddles flashed on either hand. The paddler's song came gloriously across the burnished water upon which the dipping blades struck pools of flying quicksilver.

Totuma, marvelously arrayed in a white sarong, short green tunic slashed with gold, and with a yellow-and-red striped turban on his head, sat beneath an orange umbrella. The high platform running the length of the barge between the paddlers was thronged with chiefs. Their spear-heads glittered like tongues of fire above the undulating carpet of the dyed horse-hair plumes.

With an eye to stage effect, the Rajah had forbidden the water to all other craft, but the shore was black with people. At a signal from MacGrath our ensign dipped and the little brass saluting-gun barked the first of a twenty-one gun farewell. In answer the banks of paddles on the barge were whipped in. Her cannon gave tongue shot

for shot with ours. An awed silence fell all down the crowded shore as the smoke of the discharge hung gray over the water.

MacGrath had donned a white tunic for the occasion, and wonder of wonders, had discovered somewhere a helmet which would pass muster at a distant view. The barge which had gone a little way down stream turned, and as we began to gather way, pressed close. The Rajah and MacGrath stood forward with hands raised in salute. The blood stirred under the smooth tanned skin of MacGrath's face, his eyes shone, his nostrils flared like those of a spirited horse. The cynical of speech stood revealed as an incurable romantic.

The last shot crashed out. The deck planks quivered as our engines got seriously to work. The whole crew gave a farewell shout which was answered from the barge and taken up by the people running down the banks abreast of us.

I walked aft with Mary. She put her hand on my arm and we stood silent as the green banks slipped past. Her fingers gripped close as we swung round the bend that hid Paramata town from view. The banks widened out till the individuality of lush ravine and crowding mangrove was lost in a green blur. Then suddenly we felt the first light lift beneath our feet—the playful pat of the salt sea welcoming us.

"There, sweetheart," I said. "The sea-horses have got the tow-rope; you sha'n't see Paramata and its horrors any more."

MacGRATH married us three days out, with David Llewelyn Jones and Tuala as witnesses. Tuala, calm, polite, a warrior and a gentleman, was unmoved, but poor Llewelyn for all his Biblical vocabulary couldn't see the sense in such a formality, and he was appalled by the necessity for avoiding curse-words in the few remarks he was called upon to make.

MacGrath was very nice to us, but he seemed to avoid us. He met us for meals, but always with some constraint. I think something virginal in that steel-nerved pirate was disturbed and embarrassed in the presence of what was, I suppose, our very obvious felicity, though we did our level best to behave as normal people.

For some reason, which MacGrath avoided discussing, we were conserving coal. The life of David Llewelyn, always a purgatory, had become a hell. Seated in his manhole where Mary might be within earshot, he raved to himself in tortured whispers. Below decks, his blasphemy was enough to melt steel rods.

And then one morning the lookout reported smoke on the horizon far astern and serenity and fellowship came back to MacGrath as if his brow had been brushed by angels' wings.

The smoke plumed above a smokestack as the sun climbed. By noon, through the glasses, we had a clear view of a long, low, white-painted hull, rushing through the water like a torpedo boat which she resembled.

"Recognize her?" he asked as I handed back the glasses. To my negative headshake he added: "Da Suza's private battleship. I thought he just might."

I think my face whitened as I looked down the deck to where Mary was watching with eager interest the advance of the pursuer.

"All right—nothing to bother about," the sailor said cheerfully and he went to the engine-room speaking-tube to pour balm on the seared soul of the engineer.

"Let her have every ounce she'll take, Mr. Jones," he directed. "We can't afford to be caught by what's astern."

Through the hatch we heard a boom: "Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich." And on the heels of the boom the snarl: "Shovel, you sons of evil, shovel." Every stick and bolt in the old ship began to sing.

The sea parted on either side of our bluff bows in huge curves of white foam. Bright-eyed, the unregenerate Bugis lined the rails, and their eyes brightened if possible yet more as Tuala called calmly after the first quarter of an hour: "She still gains, Tuan—a knot and a quarter to our one."

To David Llewelyn down the speaking tube MacGrath sent a matter-of-fact query.

"Did you bunker with coal, Mr. Jones—or pocket the difference between coal and peat?"

When darkness fell the relative position of the two boats had scarcely changed. Da Suza had the advantage of what change there was. On through the dark, hour after hour without lights, till I went below, leaving MacGrath, apparently sleeping, in his chair on the bridge. To my parting question if he were satisfied we could give our pursuer the slip he answered with a sigh: "I can give nothing the slip if you hang about like a scared lioness with whelps. For God's sake, go to bed."

I looked in on Mary, who was peacefully sleeping. It was an example, and

lulled by the rush and burble of water from our straining sides I was soon fast asleep myself.

I was wakened while it was still dark by a crash of musketry, an awful, heart clutching awakening. I rushed on deck in my pajamas. The moon had sunk and the night was black as Tophet. The air reeked of gunpowder smoke. The *Emma's* engines were still. About the rails ran the excited whispers of the invisible crew. I worked my way to the bridge and fumbled up to MacGrath.

"What's happened?" I whispered anxiously.

"Nothing," he gloated. "I waited for him when the moon sank and gave him a volley by sound and the light of his wake. Not bad shooting under the conditions. I reckon we've knocked his paint about a bit."

"And us?" I asked.

"We're all right. He's rather scared of the dark and he'll want to be out of this by sunrise. Suhiti too close. He's making for home like a peppered fox. Our reserve of speed knocked the poor devil's calculations all to pieces."

He was right; I could hear the beat of her engines throbbing across the calm sea. A great load lifted from my shoulders.

And so we came to Suhiti and drew alongside the jetty. Yuan Pei-fu came aboard and descended to the cabin for coffee. Mary, we had arranged, should keep out of sight till business was concluded. No word was spoken till the cups had been filled and the steward had left. Then Yuan's slightly lifted shoulders announced that he was ready.

"We've done the job," MacGrath reported casually. "Oturi managed to get himself killed by Totuma, which saved a lot of trouble. We've put Totuma on the vacant seat and started him off decently. I did a little surveying, and drew up plans for the first trade. They're in the papers. We'll have to talk about the details at leisure because you'll have to send good men for the posts and arrange a regular calling routine. But the principal business was the graven image—and there he is."

He reached into his locker and set the Fisher-boy on the table. Just for the fraction of a moment Yuan's black eyes blazed, and one imagined that the unbelievable would happen and the shutters of those eyes would go wide open.

But the lids narrowed, his snakelike yellow hand stole up a sleeve and returned holding a dagger, with whose gleaming point he scratched deliberately at the forehead of the statuette. His voice was its normal crooning monotone as, satisfied, he slipped the weapon away and set the image down on the cushioned seat at his side.

"There remains to arrange for the return of the god to those whose spiritual and material welfare has suffered too long by its absence. There is a fortune for you, Captain."

"Put it in a bank somewhere," MacGrath said without interest. "If I had it I should only go on the bust and give it away before I sobered."

"And what actually did take place on this so-simple pleasure trip?" Yuan asked. "Perhaps, Mr. Matheson, you would tell."

I told, thoroughly enjoying MacGrath's unhappy protests. Yuan nodded from time to time. Benevolence exuded from him.

"It was as I thought," he murmured when I had finished. "Incontinence in action breeds verbal brevity. Captain—I have found you. If you leave me now I shall retire to the monastery for which my natural talents make me perhaps more suited than for the cares of business."

He clapped his hands for the cups to be refilled and as the steward left again he asked: "And what has happened to the daughter of the amazing Carthew? You surely have not left her at Paramata?"

"Matheson, who told my melodrama with such dash, can now give you his own romance," MacGrath laughed and I found myself growing self-conscious under the inquisitive gleam of Yuan's black eyes.

"There's nothing to tell," I mumbled. "I married Miss Carthew."

Yuan Pei-fu rose, the twice-born mandarin.

"And you leave me to sit here talking mere business, Mr. Matheson? Am I not to have the pleasure to felicitate the noble lady who has honored my little ship by being married in her?"

THE punctilious devil was half serious, and I fled hastily. Mary, still in white sarong, came blushing. She blushed deeper when Yuan, taking her little brown fingers delicately in his yellow claw, bowed low.

"Noble lady, you see in me the dry stick which bears no bitterness against the green tree. I pray the gods smile on your union and spread flowers on every meter of the way."

He may have meant it and he may not.

"Mrs. Matheson will be anxious to see a dressmaker," he murmured after a pause. "My closed gharry is at the gangway and the courier will take you to the private entrance of Madame Marquanz. . . . . My name—when do you leave for Turamati?"

"Tonight if it can be done."

"Yes—the packet leaves at eleven. I will arrange the berths. Would you perhaps honor me by dining at the Gabriel Rossetti? It will be reasonably safe there. Precautions have been taken."

I didn't particularly want to dine, and I knew Mary didn't, but what can one do?

WE dined later in solemn state, with Yuan Pei-fu, but I could hardly attend to my food I was so occupied watching Mary sitting opposite me. Her masses of brown hair were now coiled on her sleek head and the brown form I had fallen in love with was completely clad in a well cut traveling-suit of white drill.

Yuan, a consummate host, talked as we fed—talked of war, of philosophy and of religion. He gave the impression that he had talked all the time and yet he managed to draw from Mary every scrap of useful information she possessed regarding Paramata and Atapu.

As the coffee arrived, the door of the famous Captain's room at the far end of the big dining-room burst open, and from it thundered a full-throated chorus. The words were futile, but the tune had the throb of the sea in it.

"Where are you gone to, Sailor Johnny—
Hey, Johnny?
There are brown eyes weeping down by the sea—
Oh, Johnny, Johnny!
Deep, deep down 'mong the gleaming corals,
There aint no work and there aint no morals.
She wont weep long for Sailor Johnny—
Poor Johnny!
There's other sailors come up from the sea."

I looked at MacGrath and saw kindled anew in his eyes that wild light I knew so well. . . . . Adventures are to the adventurous! Soon he would be off, I knew, on some other dare-devil cruise.

As for me and Mary—"happy," it has been said, "is the nation that has no history." I have never regretted that strange shipboard marriage. Nor, I think, has she. But the rest of our story, like that of a happy nation, is not worth recording here.

THE END.

Roughing It In Rome

Wherein a Twentieth Century gentleman finds himself whirled back across the ages and forced to fight a lion in the Roman arena.

By BERTRAM ATKEY

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

WHILE traveling in India it so happened that Mr. Hobart Honey saved the life of an important Tibetan lama; and in return the lama presented Mr. Honey with a bottle of marvelous pills, any one of which possessed the singular power of temporarily reinstating the swallower of any one of them in one of his previous existences.

Mr. Honey—unmarried, middle-aged—had taken some months to screw himself up to the point of an experiment. Nothing but an insatiable curiosity and a very good opinion of himself would have driven him to it. If he could swallow a pill and be certain of finding himself back in the days when he was, possibly, King Solomon, Julius Cæsar, Richard the First, or some such notable man, that would be quite satisfactory. But there seemed to be a certain risk that he might select a pill which would land him back on some prehistoric prairie in the form of a two-toed jackass, or on the keel of an ancient galley in the form of a barnacle, or something wet and uncomfortable of that kind.

It was undoubtedly a risk. He might find himself the Great Mogul or T'Chaka—Jonah, Shakespeare, Jack Sheppard, Adam, Oliver Cromwell, a dromedary, a polecat, a starving wolf, a skunk, or merely a house-fly in a spider's web.

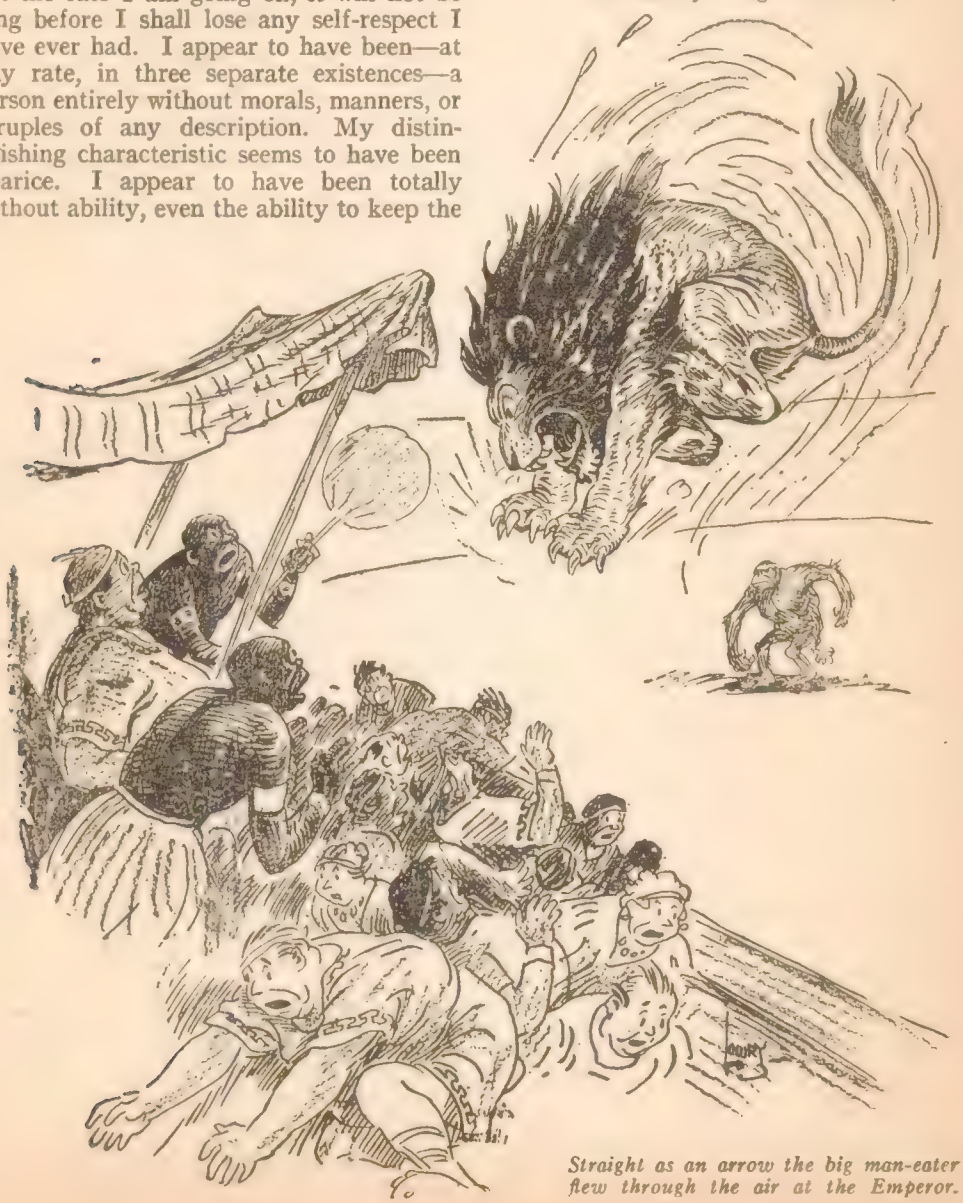
And a risk it proved; for his first venture took him back to that difficult time when he was court chiropodist to Queen Semiramis. Mr. Honey didn't enjoy being court chiropodist; nor did he, indeed, espe-

cially enjoy his experiences as a cave-man and as a pirate which, in due succession, followed. But although his singular experiences with the first three pills had quite undeniably worn off the fine edge of his enthusiasm for exploring the nooks and crannies of time, Mr. Honey had by no means abandoned the hope of re-enjoying for a brief period an existence which, if not glorious, should prove to be creditable.

"At the rate I am going on," he said rather bitterly to Peter his cat, as he settled down in his big baggy chair on the evening he proposed to venture upon his fourth pill, "at the rate I am going on, it will not be long before I shall lose any self-respect I have ever had. I appear to have been—at any rate, in three separate existences—a person entirely without morals, manners, or scruples of any description. My distinguishing characteristic seems to have been avarice. I appear to have been totally without ability, even the ability to keep the plunder which I have managed dubiously to acquire. And—to be quite frank—I have not been overburdened with intelligence.

"We must do better—yes, very much better," he added; and carefully selected a pill. He surveyed it thoughtfully as it lay in the palm of his hand. "It would be pleasant to awake and find oneself a king," he mused, less hopefully than on previous similar occasions. "But I fear greatly that the chance is remote. There have, of course, been many kings—

Since man first appeared,
A boy without beard,
And scarcely a rag to his back,



Straight as an arrow the big man-eater flew through the air at the Emperor.

as one of our minor poets has so feelingly observed; I realize, of course, that there have also been many people. But I really think I am entitled to expect an—er—position worth having before I have swallowed many more of these pills."

He poured out a glass of sherry with a little sigh.

"However, one must hope for the best, and put up with what one gets. Now"—he swallowed the pill, and flooded it down with sherry—"let us trust I emerge a general or a chief at the least."

HE leaned back tranquilly. He did not close his eyes, as he wished to see what signs—if any—of his transmigration manifested themselves. According to his custom, he had switched off all the lights except the small heavily shaded desk-light, and the room was very dim. He stared at the wall to the side of the fireplace, thinking rather vaguely that he would soon have to have the room repapered. He was getting tired of the pattern of the wall-paper—a simple striped pattern, straight lines of dark brown running down a background of slightly lighter brown—yes, tired. He decided that he would have another pattern, something lighter, airier, less severe—something with bunches of pink roses all over it. Then abruptly it occurred to him that it was growing very noisy in the street outside—extremely noisy.

Also the room was suffocatingly hot, stuffy, even fetid. And there was something very wrong with the stripes, the bars, upon the wall-paper. They seemed to have blackened, become heavier and more massive.

Mr. Honey, with a sinking heart, stared at the bars—he was sure they were bars—iron bars. It was a grating in an archway. Beyond the archway was light, bright and dazzling, and a din—a shouting and clashing of swords. And there was a peculiar and terrible smell in the air, the odor—was it?—of blood.

Mr. Honey leaped to his feet, uttering a sound that would have been an exclamation in the Twentieth Century, but was now a huge and hollow-chested roar. He ran swiftly across to the grating, gripped a bar in each hand, and shook it with all his strength. Some one from outside thrust the butt of a spear through the bars into his face, and he drew back.

He stared about him.

He found himself alone in a small arched vault, incredibly hot, extremely dirty. The floor was strewn with the skins and remains of various fruits and vegetables.

"This is positively unspeakable," said Mr. Honey, really angry; and he began to beat upon his chest with huge clenched fists, an unreasonable proceeding which, nevertheless, seemed very natural.

Then Mr. Honey caught sight of his feet. They were like large and unshapely hands. All his toes looked like splay fingers. Also he was hairy beyond all reason. A fearful doubt assailed the mind of the unfortunate seeker after knowledge. Who—or what—was he? He touched his face. It felt odd, and his teeth were enormous. His nose had vanished, but he was amply supplied with nostrils—over-amply, indeed.

Was it possible that he was a gorilla? He began to suspect it. But a moment later, and quite unconsciously, he switched his tail round to the front of him, and, to his astonishment, he perceived that growing upon the end of the tail was another hand. It was, indeed reaching out for a piece of melon that lay close by, which it picked up and politely passed to Mr. Honey.

THEN his Twentieth Century habits of thought receded, as usual, to an immense distance; and Mr. Honey the author merged definitely into what he now was—namely, a Missing Link, imprisoned in a cell which gave on to the arena in Rome, awaiting his turn to provide entertainment to the populace enjoying the "games."

He realized the position perfectly, as, muttering sullenly, he slouched forward to the grating, through which he peered. He could see very little, as the glare of the sunlight was too dazzling; but that inconvenienced him only slightly, for his scent was so keen that his flat nose was practically another pair of eyes.

Glaring through the grating, he became aware of many scents—all irritating, and some, indeed, positively maddening.

In the vault next-door, for instance, was a lion; and Huna, the Missing Link—captured in, and imported from, Africa, at great expense, for use at the "games"—hated lions bitterly. Farther along, he scented a batch of leopards; and leopards he detested and despised. He could afford to despise them, for he was seven and a half feet tall and a little over four feet and a half broad at the shoulders. His limbs were colossal, and his muscles were like wire hawsers. It should not be imagined that he particularly feared lions, tigers, or any of the hook-

The big bulk of the lion swung faster and faster as Huna revolved. The Missing Link was looking for a target.

footed carnivores; he merely disliked the habits of all flesh-eaters.

But as he snuffed at the grating, he became conscious of a certain anxiety; for there was a smell of elephant in the air—of elephant and rhinoceros, and of African buffalo. These were foes of another caliber—if foes they were. Huna had always been civil enough to them back at home. Never intimate or even friendly, but nodding acquaintances. Huna and his folk had always minded their own business, and the pachyderms and the others had minded theirs. He caught himself half hoping that there would be no trouble with any of them.

He caught a whiff of crocodile, too, and his big teeth were suddenly bared in a terrible and menacing grimace; for crocodiles were his pet aversion. As a youngster, he had nearly lost a foot once to one of these scaly terrors.

Across the shifting, complex, invisible lattice-work of many scents came faintly and elusively one which made him start and stare. Surely that was impossible! Quite impossible! He sniffed again. Yes, it was! Surely, that was the exact flavor of Jimi, his very best pal—old Jimi, one of the finest Missing-Links that ever lived!

Mr. Honey's heart jumped. He had been under the impression that he was the only one of the tribe captured on that fatal occasion when the hunters raided the village—by most evil chance, on the very night that they had all been celebrating his, Huna's, thirtieth birthday. He had not seen any other Missing Link since that night. If they had captured dear old Jimi as well, evidently they had brought him to Rome by another route.

Huna beat his chest. He did not wish Jimi any harm, but, at the same time, it was decidedly bracing to know that there was a chance of fighting shoulder to shoulder with the one Link above all others he would have chosen, had it been left to him. He pressed his face against the grating and sniffed long and keenly. Yes, that was Jimi right enough. Good old Jimi! By

the sacred coconut-tree, if only he and Jimi could get hold of a club apiece, they would show these Romans something!

He gurgled quite pleasantly as he thought of it, and a misguided and probably slightly intoxicated keeper in the arena put his finger through the bars and wiggled it playfully at the Missing Link, saying, in Latin:

"Ah, there, old boy. There you are, then!"

Mr. Honey promptly bit the finger off, and the Roman desisted hurriedly from asking foolish questions, and sought the nearest doctor.

The time slowly wore on.

His eyes becoming more accustomed to the dazzling sunlight, Huna saw the vast bulk of the big war-elephant go stamping and swaying about the arena; the rhinoceros, too, appeared and disappeared. Then, the gladiatorial combats and other unspeakable "events" being finished, the big grating of Mr. Honey's vault abruptly shot down its grooves into the ground with a clang that startled the Missing Link.

"Now, where on earth did that gate go to?" he asked himself, feeling the top of it, which protruded an inch or so above its brass-lined slots, puzzled over the thing for a moment or two, then gave it up and slouched sullenly out into the arena, looking for Jimi.

But he had the arena entirely to himself. All signs of the earlier combats had been removed, fresh sand had been sprinkled over the sinister patches which needed it, and all attendants had left the ring.

MR. HUNA, huge, hairy, awesome, stood at his full height, and stretched himself gloriously after the confinement of the vault. Then he gazed round with keen little eyes, deeply sunken under great, overhanging, hairy brows, at the crowds of excited people—tier upon tier of them, with thousands upon thousands in each tier—and his rage flamed up anew.

Bellowing in a language that none of them had ever heard before, he told them precisely what he thought of them. He shook his gigantic gnarled fists at them—tail fist and all—but they merely screamed with maniacally excited laughter.

For the advent of Huna ushered in the great event of the day. Easing the original Latin of the posters into honest English, announcements relating to Mr. Honey's proposed share in that day's games had been, roughly, as follows:

THE WHOLE ENTERTAINMENT WILL CONCLUDE
With
A COMBAT TO THE DEATH
Between
TWO FULLY-GROWN, FOREST-BRED, UNTAMABLE, HAND-TAILED MISSING LINKS
(Specially Captured in Africa)
UNIQUE! STARTLING! ORIGINAL!
Owing to the scarcity of these interesting creatures—believed by Pliny to be extinct—there has been no such combat in Rome since the days of Domitian.
DON'T MISS THE LINKS!
GENUINE HAND-TAILERS!
Before the Combat the Links Will Be Lionized and Enraged
By
A SPECIALLY IMPORTED BLACK NUBIAN LION OF GIGANTIC SIZE AND GREAT FEROCITY
THE MISSING LINKS WILL FIGHT WITH SLEDGEHAMMERS
(As Used by the Plutos)

BUT Mr. Honey had not seen the posters, and could not have read them if he had.

No living person of the seventy thousand or so packed in the great Colosseum had ever seen a Missing Link before. Indeed, they were universally believed to be extinct. Consequently, in spite of the allurements set out on the posters, the people were exceedingly doubtful as to whether the creatures—for there were two—would put up a "sporting" show.

Huna's outburst went far to remove this doubt. It was abundantly evident that this one, at any rate, was not going to take things lying down.

"Loose the lion on him!" they yelled. "Let's see what he can do! Give him his hammer now. Don't squander a good Missing Link on a lion!" shouted some—for Mr. Honey was to face the lion unarmed.

The furious Missing Link shouted back at them.

"I don't know what you're talking about, but come down here and I'll give you something to shout for!" he bawled.

Then half a dozen men entered the arena, three of them wearing round, winged steel helmets, red shirts and sandals, which also had small wings attached. These three carried long brass rods, red-hot at the end, and each carried a sort of brazier containing hot coals for heating the brass rods. These individuals were known as the Mercuries, and their duty was to galvanize the more sluggish of the fighters into quicker action with their brass rods.

The other three were huge, long-bearded men with copper crows on their heads, wearing black, star-spangled togas, and carrying enormous sledgehammers. These were the

Plutos, whose usual office it was to drag the victims of the combats from the arena, and to put out of their misery those who still breathed after the fights were over. It will be seen that the gentle ancient Roman was a tidy person, and not without foresight.

Mr. Honey, glancing at the new arrivals, decided to destroy the Plutos first—he felt he would like those three hammers—but just as he started for them, another grating shot down with a clang, and a magnificent Nubian lion leaped from his vault into the arena with a deafening roar. As he bounded out, two of the Mercuries, standing one on each side of the vault mouth, touched him with the tips of their rods. He gave a really extraordinary bound, and headed straight for Mr. Honey, whom he appeared to think was responsible for the sudden stabs of pain.

THE Missing Link set his teeth and prepared for business.

"All right—if you must, you must!" he muttered.

The lion rose in the air, leaping straight for Huna's throat. But with extraordinary swiftness the Missing Link swerved aside; and as the ferocious brute passed him, he seized it by the tail with his left hand and his tail hand, giving at the same time a peculiar side twist, and bracing himself against the strain. There was a jar, and the lion landed on his side, snarling. Instantly Huna, allowing his right hand to take the grip of his tail hand, began swiftly to slither round in a circle, pulling hard at the tail of the Nubian man-eater all the time.

Almost at once the big bulk of the lion was lifted into the air, swinging round and round faster and faster as Huna revolved faster. The man-eater was making singular noises, but the Missing Link ignored them. He was gazing coolly round the packed tiers looking for a target.

A patch of special splendor caught his eye—a roomy, shaded place, where sat an arrogant-looking man, whom swarthy slaves fanned unceasingly, surrounded by gorgeously bejeweled and appareled people. As a matter of fact, this was the Emperor, but Huna neither knew this, nor cared. He was too busy taking careful aim at him to wonder who or what he was. He put on speed until he was accomplishing an incredible number of revolutions per minute, and then suddenly released the now completely giddy lion.

STRAIGHT as an arrow the big man-eater flew through the air at the Emperor. But Huna's long sojourn in the vault had affected his judgment a little; and the lion, clawing furiously in every direction at once, fell short of the Emperor and landed upon a little group of three men seated just below the throne. In an instant two of these were extinct, and the third ruined for life. The lion, however, was too giddy really to know what it was doing, and a moment later was dispatched by the bodyguard of soldiers round the Emperor. It was all over in less than two minutes, and amid a literally deafening uproar, the Missing Link sat down to take breath.

"Perhaps that'll learn 'em to set lions on to me!" he said, panting; and watched the uproar in the royal box.

The defunct lion was cast back into the arena, and Cæsar rose to show that he was uninjured, and to receive the acclamations of the multitude.

The three unfortunates sacrificed by the lion were carefully removed by their slaves, and the clamor of the delighted crowds gradually died down as they awaited the orders of Cæsar.

Cæsar, for his part, was making a few inquiries, and receiving some good news—to wit, one of the two nobles destroyed by the lion was none other than the Lord Cusscarrara Superbus, a nephew of Cæsar. But he was a nephew whom Cæsar strongly suspected of being the head and moving spirit of a conspiracy which, his detectives said, would shortly be started with the object of rendering vacant Cæsar's throne—subsequently to be reoccupied by Cusscarrara Superbus.

Consequently, in the blunt, downright Roman way, Cæsar was unfeignedly glad to see the finish of Cusscarrara, and did not hesitate to say so to his wife and one or two friends close by. He gave an order to a courtier, who passed it to the heralds.

IT was announced a moment later that the Emperor, ever an admirer of bravery, had decided that the fight between the Missing Links would now take place as per announcement (loud cheers) but that in the event of the victory of the Link now occupying the arena, his life would be spared, and instead of being called upon to fight the rhinoceros, he would be tamed, if possible, have the freedom of the city bestowed upon him, and be appointed chief gladiator to the Emperor. The long and sustained cheer-

ing of the populace showed them to be in complete agreement with the orders, and Cæsar proceeded to give the sign.

The Mercuries speedily left the ring; the Plutos, throwing their hammers across to Huna, followed their example without delay.

While Mr. Honey was collecting the hammers another grating shot down. For a time nothing emerged from the gloomy vault now opened to the arena.

"Get on, fool! If you make a success of it, Cæsar might appoint you valet to the hand-tailers!"

Mr. Honey, armed with the entire set of hammers—one in each hand and one in his tail-hand—his blood now thoroughly up, pranced about the arena, his eyes fixed on the vault, uttering blood-curdling threats.

Suddenly the occupant of the vault slouched forward, gnawing unconcernedly at a huge vegetable-marrow. It stepped into the arena, blinking a little in the blinding sunlight—a mighty Link, bigger and uglier even than Mr. Honey. It had a good-natured face, however, and in its eyes was a gleam of humor that was missing from Huna's.

It was Jimi—good old Jimi!

Mr. Honey stopped flourishing his hammers.

"Hey, Jimi! Hallo, Jimi!" he shouted gayly. "How are you, old man? How goes it? What are you doing here? Give us a bit of marrow! Have a hammer, old chap—might need it."

Mr. Honey passed his friend a hammer, and they shook hands—tail hands, as was the custom among the Missing Links of those days—warmly.

Jimi glanced round at the breathless multitude watching them.

"It looks to me, old man, as if we're rather in the cart, hey?" he remarked. "There's an awful lot of people here."

Huna nodded.

"Still, we've got some goodish hammers, if it comes to the worst. Sit down, old man, and tell us how you got here. This comes of drinking too much palm-wine on birthdays, Jimi."

Jimi grinned. "Oh, well, what's the odds as long as you're happy!" he said.

They sat down amicably side by side, eating marrow, their hammers temporarily laid aside.

"They aint going to scrap at all, them Links aint!" yelled a disappointed voice from the gallery, or top tier, of the amphitheater. "Why, they're pals, mates; that's what they are. Where's the blooming Mercuries? Let 'em touch 'em up a bit and enrage 'em."

Cæsar, who had taken quite a liking to Huna, sprang to his feet.

"Off with that man's caput!" he said. "Behead me him! No, stay! Since he is

so eager for sport, let him be brought to the arena and provide it! Match him against the bear from Dacia."

THEY knew how to deal with rebels in those days, and hardly had Cæsar given his order before the lad from the gallery—a tough-looking, unshaven ruffian in a ragged toga—was hustled by the soldiers down to the entrance to the arena.

But Cæsar had had another idea. It had occurred to him that it would be useless to spare the Missing Links unless they were tamable. He ordered, therefore, that dainty food should be laid before the Links as a preliminary, and that the protester should do the laying before.

The order went forth, with a musical accompaniment by the heralds. It pleased the audience, rendered good-humored by the sight of much bloodshed and the expectation of more, and within a few moments the gallery boy, bearing a tray of magnificent fruit with goblets of wine, and protesting violently, was being "touched up" by the Mercuries with a view to urging him on.

"Get on, fool!" hissed one of them. "If you make a success of it, Cæsar might appoint you valet to one of the hand-tailers. It might be the making of you! And, anyway, you can but die once."

Making the best of an extremely bad job, the doomed wretch advanced upon the two Missing Links, who, seated in the sand of the arena, were chatting over their adventures, totally ignoring the noisy crowd.

Mr. Honey broke off as the shivering bearer of fruit drew near.

"What's the idea, d'you think, Jimi?" he asked.

Jimi fixed his twinkling eyes upon the goblets.

"Why, it looks to me as if it has struck somebody among this bald-faced rabble that it's time for a drink, and I agree."

"Me too," quoth Huna.

They surveyed the man so good-humoredly as he drew nearer that he plucked up courage, and as neither of them made a move to seize their hammers, he came on quite jauntily. He dropped on one knee, and proffered the tray with a rather nervous wink.

" 'Ave a drink, mates?" he said hoarsely. "I never meant no offense when I hollered out."

They did not understand his Latin, but they did his gesture.

Mr. Honey took a large crystal goblet—passed it to Jimi. Then he took one himself.

They held the goblets up to the light.

"This is better-class stuff than homemade palm wine, my boy, unless I'm very much mistaken," said Jimi. "Well, good health!"

"Here's luck!" said Mr. Honey.

They replaced the empty goblets.

"Now, that's wine, that is," they said simultaneously.

Then they took a pineapple, a bunch of grapes, and a melon, and Mr. Honey, staring at the "waiter," peremptorily rang his fingernail against the side of the empty goblet. The man who does not understand that signal has yet to be born, and the waiter hurriedly left to get the goblets refilled.

"I fancy they mean to make a fuss of us, after all," said Jimi, surveying the crowd.

Mr. Honey agreed. "I'm willing," he said. "If they treat us right, we'll treat them right. That's fair enough, aint it?"

"Sure," said Jimi. "But I wonder why?"

"So do I. Still, never mind. . . . . Here's how!"

"Happy days!" replied Jimi.

WHETHER it was after his fifth goblet, or his eighth, that things began to get confused and whirly, Mr. Honey never really knew. He fancied that, after a while a lot of aristocratic people came into the arena, and were very friendly, but somehow things went all foggy. He thinks he must have gone to sleep. At any rate, he woke suddenly to hear himself saying gravely: "Well, chin-chin, Jimi!" to Peter his cat, who, sitting on the hearthrug in the study, was regarding him with every symptom of grave disapproval.

Mr. Honey pulled himself together. Evidently the fourth pill had been another awful failure. What a horrible "past" he seemed to have had!

He stared into the fire for a long time.

"A Missing Link!" he said presently, with extraordinary bitterness. "A hand-tailed Missing Link, carousing in the Colosseum at Rome, with a kindred spirit. Bah! Disgraceful!"

Then he rose abruptly, put on his hat and coat, and went for a sharp walk. What else was there to do?

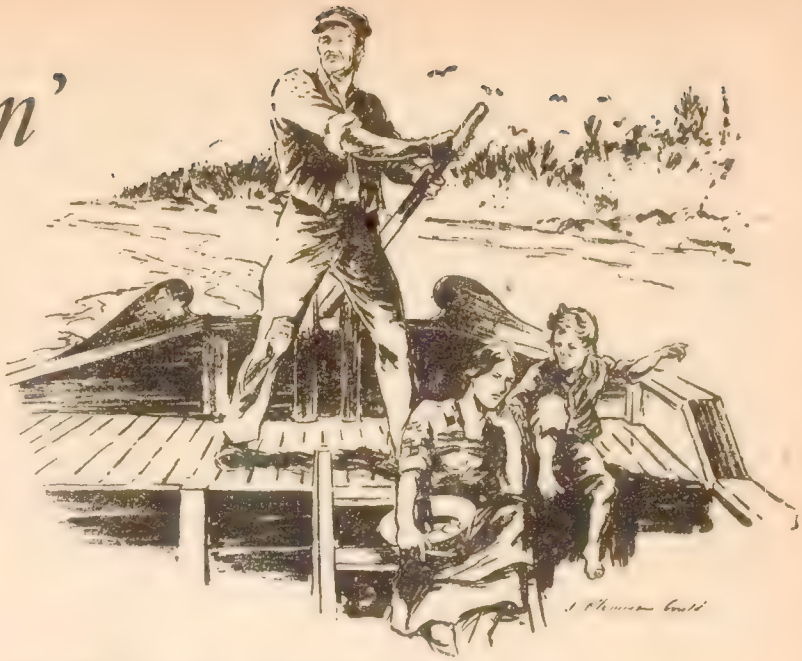
One nightmare per night was enough for Mr. Honey—enough and to spare.

"Wild Work with William the Conqueror," another amazing adventure of Mr. Honey, will be described by Mr. Atkey in the next, the August, issue.

Driftin'

A vivid and unusual little drama of river life by the talented author of "Billy Boy."

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould



By EWING WALKER

THE best part of all was the smells and the sounds as we drifted along at night when the moon was up. I 'spect, maybe, I liked the smells best—the wet mud of the banks, and the sandbars a-coolin' off and the fog that settles over the river heavy-like and lonesome. I don't know, though. Perhaps, after all, it was the sounds at night that was the nicest, with the old boat driftin' along and you a-lyin' there half-asleep but thinkin' plenty—the limbs of trees scratchin' against the sides of the house-boat, the slushin' of the water against the hull, the little sneakin' sound that tells you a turtle's just slid into the stream, a mockin' bird off yonder in the woods a-feelin' mighty biggity and a owl that, somehow, makes you pull the covers closer around you. I don't just know; sometimes it's the sounds I liked best, and other times it's the smells.

We've been down a heap of rivers. A couple of times we made the Mississippi, but most we works the smaller streams—like the Sabine and the Ouachita over in Louisiana, and the Tombigbee in Alabama, and the Pearl and Leaf and Pascagoula in Mississippi. I 'spect, maybe, I like the Pascagoula best of all, for the fishin's good and they's always squirrels right at you, as you might say, and now and then a wild turkey that didn't hear you driftin' along. Once I saw some tracks I thought was hogs, but Pap said they was deer. It's a mighty fine stream, the Pascagoula, and if you ever do any house-boatin' or driftin' you ought to try it once.

WE'D finally get to the mouth of a stream and tie up a day or two, to sort of get our bearings, and then Pap'd start out to sell the boat.

"We could stay—right here," my mother would always say, sort of hopeful-like. "We could stay here—and live in the boat—and Bub could go to school."

But the proposition never seemed to hit Pap right. "I'm a man for driftin'," he'd allus say.

And my mother, for some reason, would turn away at that, lookin' queer-like and sayin' no more. So, sooner or later, Pap'd sell the boat and we'd go by land pretty well up some other stream, where Pap'd build another boat and we'd start all over again.

Of course, a heap of the trips I don't remember, bein' too young, but a plenty more I do, for I'm nine now, and I even mind one we made when I wasn't four. Driftin' down the river, somehow, sticks in your mind. Maybe it's because there's nothin' hurried and everything has time to sort of soak in. . . . .

We'd come to a town and tie up; and Pap, first settin' his trot-lines, would go up

into the town and look it over and, maybe, meet some old friends—for he'd been to all these places before. And at every town we come to, my mother would wait till Pap was gone; and then, for some reason, lookin' queer-like and sayin' nothin', she'd take me by the hand and we'd go up into the town. And we'd keep on walkin' till we come to a certain building—in some towns they was brick and in others they was frame—and we'd stop off to one side and look at it, neither of us sayin' anything for an uncomfortable long time. I'd feel my mother's hand grippin' mine harder and I'd see her bitin' her lips a little and lookin' straight ahead.

Finally, she'd say, sort of uneven and low-like: "That's—a school."

OF course, I already knew what it was, so I'd say nothin' and we'd just stand there lookin'. Then, in a minute or two, she'd speak again: "They learn boys—in there—to read—and to write—and to figger."

"G'og'aphy, too," I said.

"And gives 'em a chance—to be men."

Maybe, standin' a minute or two more, she'd turn away, still grippin' my hand, and we'd walk back to the boat. She'd stop on the bank a minute, lookin' down at it with a look I didn't like for her to have; and finally we'd be back in the boat again.

I keep talkin' to you about Pap. He wasn't just that, my own bein' dead for the longest; but I called him Pap just the same.

Well, we'd stay in a town a day or a week or a month, maybe; and then, all of a sudden, Pap'd get up and stretch and yawn-like and say, "Well, we better be driftin'. We've wore out *this* town."

Always, my mother'd look at him almost pleadin'-like and say to him, "I'll ask you once more, Tom. Let's stay here. You can get a job. I can work; I can wash; I—I can do anything!"

Pap'd look at her sort of mad-like and say, "Stay *here?* Who the hell would live in *this* town?" And by then he'd be reachin' for the rope that held us to the bank.

A couple of times my mother gripped his arm, tryin' to stop him. "The boy—could go to school," she'd say.

"Aw, we'll git him in school some day. Let's drif'!"

And away we'd go, bumpin' into the bank a time or two and then finally out in the current and floatin' slow and comfortable-like downstream, Pap a-standin' up with his legs braced and his head back and a steerin'-oar in his hand, lookin' for all the world like nothin' could be such fun. But my mother'd be all bent over, her hands lyin' tired-like in her lap.

I MIND one day—it was this past-gone summer—we was driftin' down the Ouachita; and I see tied up to the bank ahead of us the swellest house-boat that ever you see—all painted white and with shinin' brass and most as long as a side-wheeler. I jumped up to look at her better and she sure was a beauty.

"Some day," I said, "I'll have one like that."

The words weren't hardly out of my mouth, before my mother was standin' in front of me, grippin' my shoulders and lookin' down at me as she never had looked.

"Don't say that!" she sort of hissed. "Don't say that!"

Pap heard her, and he laughed like he sure was tickled. "You've got the driftin'-itch yourself, Bub," he called.

My mother looked at him a minute; and then her hands fell from my shoulders and she went down into the cabin.

This last stop of ours was the longest we ever made. We tied up a mile or such a matter below Columbia, and the rope weren't hardly taut 'fore Pap was headed for town. He stayed till after dark and when he come back another man was with him.

"This here is Lem," Pap said, "Lem Smalt. An old buddy o' mine."

"Howdy, ma'am," Lem said. "Hit sure is good for sore eyes, seein' Tom again."

After a while, my mother and me turned in, but Pap and Lem sat talkin' out on the end of the boat—talkin' so low you couldn't get nothin' they said. Finally, Lem up and left and Pap came into the cabin.

"Who's that man?" my mother asked low-like, thinkin' I'm asleep.

"I told you," Pap said, "Lem Smalt."

"That aint what I mean," said Mom. "*Who* is he?"

"Old friend of mine," Pap answered. And then, as though changin' the subject: "We'll hang up awhile here. We're gonna make some money—Lem and me."

" 'Money?' " Mom asked, sort of jubous-like.

"Plenty," said Pap.

And then she set up in bed. "You'll do nothin', Tom, that—"

"Never mind, old gal," Pap interrupted.

"Killin'—Lem Smalt? Why, Sheriff, I just told you I was sick all night."

"Don't go gettin' in a sweat, now. It's just a little job we're gonna make some money on." And then, as though he'd just thought of it: "Maybe we'll make enough to put Bub in school."

After that they both was quiet; but I felt my mother's hand sort of restin' on mine a minute, for some reason or other.

PAP and Lem was gone every day and sometimes most of the night; and once in a while me and Mom would walk up into the town and stand lookin' at the school, her grippin' me by the hand and always sayin' the same things over again. You know, like I told you—"That's a school"; and "They learn boys—to read—and to write—and to figger—and a chance to be men"—and so on.

One day I was out squirrel-huntin' and I come to the edge of a slough, when I heard somebody talkin'. I stood plumb still and the next minute I knew it was Pap and Lem. Maybe I oughtn't've done it, but I crep' up close and looked at 'em. They was laughin' and jokin' and fillin' up bottles out of a keg.

Well, pretty quick I sneaked away. I warn't just sure what they was doin', but I had a good suspicion and I didn't want Pap to catch *me* around there.

I never went back to that slough. Pap and Lem was gone every day right on and I most knew where they was, but I let it go at that.

Just about a whole month went by; and then late one night, Pap came back to the boat. "We're driftin'—right now," he said; and I knew from the way he talked that he was riled.

"It's dark," my mother said. "You'll wreck us."

"Wreck and be damned!" said Pap. "We're driftin'." And he untied her and shoved off and away we went feelin' our way downstream.

We drifted all that night and till noon next day, and finally tied up at the mouth of Gordon's Creek.

"Why here?" asked Mom, worried-like. "There's no town around here."

"I've plans," said Pap; and tie up we did. All the rest of that day he just set on the bank. He didn't even wet a hook.

Along toward night my mother went up to him and put her hand on his arm. "Where's Lem?" she asked.

He must not of liked that, for he shook off her arm. "Don't ask me about that double-crossin'—" Maybe you know what he called him.

"What did he do?" my mother asked, quiet as you please.

"He beat me out o' my part," said Pap.

"Your 'part'?"

"Of the money."

"What money, Tom?"

"The money we—made," Pap said, hesitatin'-like. "But if he thinks he can get by with that—" He stood up and took my mother's elbows in his hands and looked down at her. "Now, listen to me; and you, too, Bub!"—lookin' toward where I'm settin'. "I'll be gone awhile. Little job to 'tend to. If anybody happens along askin' for me, tell 'em I'm sick in the boat—bad sick. Tell 'em you think I've got somethin' ketchin'—smallpox or such-like. I'll be back 'fore day and we'll drift away from this dirty hole."

My mother reached for his arm and held him. "Don't go, Tom! Don't go!"

But he didn't pay her any mind, and in a minute he'd disappeared into the woods.

SURE 'nough, when he come back, I turned over in my bunk and looked out of the window, and saw it still was dark.

"You—you did—what you went for, Tom?" my mother asked, sort of uneasy-like.

He nodded, slow. "Yep! I sure done—what I went for! Now, remember, you two: I was powerful sick all night and stayed right in my bunk." And then he sort of tried to laugh. "I'm feelin' some better now. When it's good day, I'll cast off and we'll drift awhile."

I rolled over to go back to sleep, but I'd hardly got comfortable when I heard a passel o' hosses comin'; and pretty soon they stopped up on the bank and a man hollered: "Hello!"

Pap reached over and put his hand over my mouth, and I heard him whisper, sort of hoarse-like, to my mother: "Keep still—till they call again!"

We didn't have to wait long. "You on the boat, there! Strike a light!" And the next minute we heard several of 'em step onto the boat.

"Open the door—and ask who it is," Pap whispered.

My mother opened the door. "Who is it?" she asked, quiet-like.

"I'm sheriff o' this county," the man in front said, "and I'd like a word with Tom Giles."

I thought I heard my mother catch her breath; but maybe I was wrong, for mighty quick she said, as calm as you please: "Come right in, sir. Tom's in bed. He was sick—last night."

Mom had stood by Pap through a heap of things, and I reckoned she was standin' by him now, so I made ready to do a little lyin' on my own hook.

Pap was a-settin' up in bed by now. "Come right in, Sheriff. I sure was under the weather last night, but I'm feelin' some better now."

"I'm proud to hear that," the sheriff said, " 'cause you've got a right smart ride in front o' you."

" 'Ride?' " Pap asked, sort of surprised-like.

"A one-way ride," the sheriff said; "and I fetched you a plumb good hoss."

By then Pap was settin' up straighter. "What do you want with me?"

"Oh, nothin' much. Just a little matter o' killin' Lem Smalt."

"Killin'—Lem Smalt? You mean you think— Why, Sheriff, I just told you I was sick all night."

The sheriff sort of chuckled. "That's sure throwin' off on Lem, who called hisself bad—lettin' a sick man bump him off."

"But Sheriff, you're barkin' up the wrong tree! I tell you I was sick, the whole endurin' night, right here on the boat. Ask my wife."

THE sheriff turned to her. "Was he sick, ma'am?"

Maybe she hesitated just a little, but it warn't for long. "Yes sir—he was sick—all night." Yep, Mom sure had learned to stick by Pap.

The sheriff turned to me. "How 'bout it, Bub?"

"Bad sick," I said. "We thought, maybe, it was somethin' ketchin'—smallpox or somethin'."

"I see." The sheriff chuckled once more. "Somethin' folks would be skeered to get close to, eh? Well, shake a foot, Tom. Let's get goin'. Me an' my men aint so leary o' smallpox—leastways, your kind. And the county'll furnish you a right good doctor. Let's move!"

My mother glanced up at the sheriff. "Can I go too, sir—Bub and me?"

"Why, sure, ma'am. We'll lend you and the boy a hoss between you. But you needn't come, 'scusin' you want to, for I aint lettin' no secret out when I say a woman can't be forced to testify against her husband."

"I didn't know that, sir," Mom said, "but I'd like—to come along—with Tom."

Mom sure had learned to stick by Pap.

ANYWAY, pretty soon we was headed toward town, Pap with handcuffs on him. and me and Mom ridin' one hoss and a couple of the sheriff's men doublin' on another.

It was just breakin' day when we reached the edge of the town and the sheriff stopped us under one of those low-hangin' live-oak trees. "All o' you men hang close to me and Tom here. There's a right smart o' feelin' over this killin', and the boys is gettin' sort o' worked up." He turned to my mother. "If I was you, ma'am, I'd sort o' lag behind."

She didn't seem to hear him. She was lookin' straight before her toward a building that was sort of misty-like in the early mornin' light; and I felt one of her hands grippin' mine tight, and I heard her breath comin' fast.

About then, Pap leaned over my mother, whisperin': "Mind, now! Say nothin', 'cept I was sick in my bed all night." He tried to smile a little. "By this time tomorrow we'll be driftin' again."

Maybe she didn't hear that word *driftin';* maybe she heard too plain. I just can't say. Leastways, she turned to the sheriff again; and I saw her bitin' her lips, and I heard her breath comin' faster and I saw her eyes were shinin'-like. "What building—is that?" she asked.

The sheriff was sort of surprised. "Why, that's just the school, ma'am."

"'Just—the school,'" she whispered, sort of far-away-like, if you know what I mean. "'Just—the school!'"—like that. She was still for a long while; and then she turned toward Pap. And I see her sort of start to reach out toward him, but just as quick she clenched her hands at her sides again.

"Good-by, Tom," she said, low-like.

HE sort of straightened up, at that. "'*By?* What's the idea? I'll be out in a little while, and then we'll be driftin' away from here."

Maybe Mom heard him, but she didn't give any sign. "We all—lied—awhile—ago." She was speakin' to the sheriff, but still lookin' toward the school. "Tom was away—last night."

"She's lyin'!" Pap sort of screeched.

The sheriff didn't pay him any mind. He was just lookin' at Mom, sort of wonderin'—and sort of pityin'-like. "I'm sorry, ma'am," he said; and then: "We'll be goin' now. If you need anything, ma'am, I'd count it a favor if you'd let me know."

Mom was still lookin' through the dim light toward the school, that was growin' some clearer, and she was still grippin' my hand desp'rate hard. "I've got all—that I need," she kind of whispered, and meanin' I hardly know what.

And the sheriff and his men rode away with Pap.

I DON'T know how long me and Mom stood there, but it must have been a long time; and her eyes never left the buildin' in front of us. And then, after a while: "That's—that's a school," she whispered.

Of course, I didn't answer, knowin' good enough that it was.

"They learn boys—in there—to read, and to write, and to figger."

I didn't hardly know her voice, it was that strange-like and happy-like, if you know what I mean—and sorrowin'-like, too, I reckon. "And it gives 'em—a chance—to be men," she said. Still holdin' my hand, like she was feared I might get lost or somethin', she started back toward the houseboat.

I don't know just what time it was, but of course the sun was high when we got there, and we was both dead tired. I wanted to go on down into the boat and rest up a spell; but my mother held me back up on the bank at her side. I saw her eyes was blinkin', and her head was uncommon high, and I heard her murmurin' to herself:

"Oh, Tom, Tom!"

Finally, not takin' her eyes from the boat, she said: "Get some splinters."

Sort of wonderin', I got the ax and cut some wood and handed the splinters to her. All the time she hadn't moved—had just stood there, her head up and her eyes blinkin' as she looked down at the boat. And then, mighty slow-like, she went into the boat and soon come out with the splinters in one hand and some matches in the other. And my heart come into my throat as I saw her get the kindling into a good hot blaze and then hold it to the cabin till it was poppin' and cracklin', for it sure was a fine boat that would of sold for a good sum.

We stood on the bank and watched her burn down plumb to the water and finally sink out of sight.

"Could anyone have been listening on this balcony?"

Illustrated by
J. Fleming Gould

Free Lances in Diplomacy

"The Parliament Plot" is one of the most unusual and dramatic stories in all this remarkably sustained series.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

THE Trevor cars are not conspicuous—but a second glance shows each of them to be about the last word in power, luxurious fittings and equipment for long or short journeys. The liveries are in tones of rich brown suede-cloth, with the subordinate tones a few shades lighter.

Two men came out of a large shop in the Strand and stood talking for a moment near a beautifully appointed car at the curb—neither of them knowing the chauffeur's livery, which is where they were very much out of luck. As they moved off up the street, a well-dressed man came out of the same door swinging a big press-camera by the strap. He recognized the livery at a glance, and halted.

The occupant of the car had been listening to the two men—one of whom was a well-known Labor Member of the House; his companion was rather a personage, if judged by his manner and clothes. Evidently he belonged to the engineering profession—for he was asking the M. P. if it would be possible to see the beam-trussing under the roof of the Parliament Buildings, and the roof itself. He said he considered the building one of the finest things Sir Charles Barry ever did in the line of Tudor-Gothic and was much interested in the details of its construction. The M. P. said he thought he could wangle a permit for his friend to inspect the roof and upper floors if he called for him at the House before two-thirty that afternoon. . . . .

The journalist had not stood outside the shop door more than three seconds when he saw a hand beckoning from the car and found, as he had hoped, that it was the Marchioness of Lyonesse herself.

"John Gretorex of the *Evening Mail*—and mysteriously turning up at the very second I need you!" she exclaimed. "You know Michael Finney the M. P., of course? —Look quickly! He's going up the street with another man, a bit shorter. Get into the car—we'll drive closer to them! Topping luck that you've your camera with you. Can you get me two or three good shots of that shorter man—then find out his name and where he's stopping?"

"Guess that shouldn't be difficult, Marchioness," said Gretorex easily. "I'll be shooting at Finney, you see—any M. P. is fair game for the newspapers—and his companion naturally will be in the picture. Quite all right to ask for the friend's name, also. *H-m-m*—if they take a taxi it may require some doing to get the shots—"

"The other man has an appointm'nt with Finney before two-thirty at the House—they're going to have a look-see at the roof and upper floors if he can get a permit. The stranger seems to be an engineer. If he does keep the appointm'nt—as I fancy almost certain—can't you go up on that roof before they do, and hide somewhere—get the shots there without their knowing it?"

"Sure thing! I managed to obtain a permit, through the C.I.D., for any part of those buildings. Helped them a bit on a murder case, then pointed out that, while not so many things have happened in the Parliament Buildings since Guy Fawkes' time, it was one of the places where something *might* happen any old day, and that if I had the run of the place, as they do, I might spot it just by accident. They talked some about 'cheeky beggars'—but got me the permit just the same. I've taken some corking pictures from the roofs. Shall I fetch the prints to Park Lane?"

"Please! You'll have something for me by morning, I fancy? Drop in for tiffin at one o'clock."

JOHN GRETOREX is considered by the Marquess and his most intimate friends as a personal protégé of Countess Nan (the Marchioness is now Countess of Dyvnaint in her own right). She had seen him talking one evening in Red Lion Court with one of the star men of the great news syndicate in which the Trevors own controlling shares—and after Gretorex had started for the editorial rooms, she asked Phillips who he was.

"An American press-man, Your Ladyship. Practically every penny he had except one five-pun note was stolen from him last week—an' I fancy he's been tramping the London streets ever since, trying to wangle a berth with some news-sheet. I'll wager that he's had nothing but a cup of coffee since yesterday morning. Yet you'd never imagine it from his manner—the chap is game. I sent him up with my card to see Mr. Sunderland, but it's only a hundredth chance for his being taken on."

"Would you say this man has had much news experience?"

"Aye, Your Ladyship. Even from the short time we talked, he appeared to be a first-class press-man."

"Then you wait here and stop him if he comes down before I've had a word with Sunderland—but keep my name out of it," instructed the Countess. "Sunderland can do with a first-class man from one of the American newspapers."

Gretorex had made good from his first assignments—he had the knack of making people talk when they meant to do nothing of the sort. He called upon the Superintendent at Scotland Yard on his second day—and fixed up a working agreement which proved to have its advantages on both sides. Sunderland considered the man a decided acquisition to his staff.

WHEN Gretorex fetched his prints around to Park Lane, the Marchioness had just come in from some of her morning activities. Ten minutes later they were at luncheon with the Marquess and Earl Lammerford of St. Ives. Countess Nan briefly sketched the scrap of talk she had overheard in the Strand and what the American had been doing for her, then asked Gretorex whether Michael Finney's companion had appeared to be a bona-fide engineer.

"That point occurred to me while I was listening to them, Marchioness," said Gretorex. "It happened that I was taking the engineering course at college—junior year—when I left for the war. I never returned to college—but I served in one of the engineering battalions, and qualified. This man (Finney addressed him both as 'Baron' and as 'Grunberg') never has done any construction work in his life—I discovered that easily. Yet he's so infernally clever with the patter and his fund of general information that none but an experienced engineer would spot the fact that he couldn't handle any sort of construction. As nearly as I could figure, he had some ulterior object in getting up on that roof—

which Finney never suspected. I heard a good deal of their talk both on the roofs and in the loft-spaces immediately under them, where Grunberg made some of his worst mistakes when talking of 'beam-trussing.' He used a number of Russian and Polish words which Finney didn't understand, but which newspaper men often pick up. My impression was that he's a Russo-Polish-Hungarian half-breed."

"Could you figure out at all what he was after, John?" the Marquis asked.

"Well—I thought over several different theories, sir, to see how they might fit. . . . . Finney must know something of the man's antecedents. Presumably, the association between the two is political—which would place the fellow among the Communists, Bolshevists or Socialists in Eastern Europe. This naturally brings up the question as to what such a man wanted to learn on the roofs or in the lofts of Parliament Buildings—and that in turn suggests some sort of Bolshevist or revolutionary activities. I began to wonder whether there would be very much difficulty in getting fifty or a hundred of those Reds up in the lofts at any time—how long they might remain there without discovery."

"Prob'ly not more than three or four hours, if they got up there at all—which one is inclined to doubt. Parliam'nt buildings are fairly well policed, d'ye see—with frequ'nt inspection in every part. Let a person without the proper pass attempt to go up into those lofts an' watch how far he'd get."

"Suppose a number of passes could be forged?"

"The attendants an' the police would soon notice the unusually large number and investigate."

"Suppose there were some way of getting on to those roofs without coming up through the buildings—and that a number of men got down into the lofts from above?"

"They'd be spotted by the police on their next round—an' it would take some doing to get on those roofs without coming through the buildings! I doubt if there's a ladder in the Fire Brigade that would reach them. Just what did Grunberg seem to be doing?"

"Looking down over the parapets on both sides—after climbing to where he could do so. He asked Finney if the windows directly under him were not those of the House galleries. Then he wanted to know if the Members ever had supper on the river-terrace after dark—thought it must be a delightful place on a hot summer night. When they had gone down and I was figuring over what they had said, it struck me that neither of them would have much trouble in examining both Barry's plans and the subsequent repair-plans in the borough offices, or wherever those plans are accessible—as they must be for various purposes. So it seemed to me that Grunberg undoubtedly knew already what rooms were on every floor—their exact location—the position where their windows would appear in the façade, outside. Thinking along that line, I wondered if he were simply checking up on which rooms were kept permanently locked—which loft-spaces were full of derelict furniture and other stuff. Just what did the man have in mind? I found a Member who knows Finney, and put a few guarded inquiries to him. He says Grunberg is accepted here by diplomats and bankers as a bona-fide Polish Baron, and suggested inquiries at the Polish Legation—which I made. They vouch for his being exactly what he appears—a Baron of considerable wealth and wide acquaintance—but would give me no detailed information beyond that. This apparently settles the crook question, Marchioness. Eh?"

"*Apparently,* John; that's why I wanted the pictures. I shall be working on them this afternoon—you can stay and watch, if you like."

"I'd be immensely interested—but I've two assignments to cover for the paper. I'll be back here before five."

"I'll have something to show you by that time," Her Ladyship promised.

GRETOREX is a conscientious newspaper-man. He covered his assignments and was told by Sunderland to consider himself at Countess Nan's orders until she had no further need of him.

When Gretorex reached the house, he was shown up to the living-room of the Marchioness' private suite on the second floor, where he found her working at an illustrator's tilt-back easel on a swivel pedestal, the flat-topped desk along the window being covered with several pencil and crayon sketches made from his camera-prints in three different positions. She was just finishing a sketch on the easel, but called his attention to those upon the desk.

"I want you to look at those first, John—so that you may understand thoroughly just what I'm doing. Although one of these

is a more perfect likeness than the others I fancy you'll admit they're all pretty close to your photo-prints. Ever do any sketching yourself?"

"Nothing but rough outline-stuff—I wouldn't know quite how to tackle anything as good as your sketches. Funny I hadn't happened to hear of this as one of Your Ladyship's accomplishments! . . . . I'd like to write it up some day."

"That's been done. I've exhibited twice at Burlington House—when I had time to finish up some oils. My good old *maestro* —who is eighty-six, and lives on the hill above the Bristol in Naples—scolds me for not doing at least one painting a year to keep in practice. But let's get back to this man Grunberg. You'd scarcely believe what a tiny line or shadow will do in altering the expression of the entire face—so I'm going to show you—with a subsequent object in view." (She removed the sketch from the easel, turning it face down upon the desk and substituting one of the others.) "The man has a short, dark mustache, yet both of the lips show under it. Now watch! I rub the curve of the lower lip, getting more high-light on it, and slightly deepen the shadow underneath. See what happens? It gives that lower lip the appearance of protruding slightly beyond the upper one —an expression of contempt. Now I darken it again with the stump—the lips are normal. I put a trifle more high-light on the upper lip—bring it down just a bit farther under the tip of the nose. What impression do you get?"

"Looks as though he were smelling something disagreeable!"

"Precisely! And yet the changes I made were very slight. Now I draw the side-line of the face a sixteenth of an inch wider on each side—the mouth-line a sixteenth shorter at each corner—each eyebrow a sixteenth shorter at the outside end. Where's Grunberg now?"

"By Jove! Why—that's simply amazing, you know! Nobody would believe that drawing was made from my print!"

"That's why you never get a true portrait unless the contour lines of the face are in exactly the same proportion as the original, at the start, and aren't changed as the work progresses."

"H-m-m! I'm wondering if those little changes would have as marked effect if made with a grease-pencil on a living face, by some one who knew just how to do it?"

"I'll show you! . . . . And in your press-work you may always keep at the back of your mind the fact that any person may look like somebody else altogether if you wash his or her face thoroughly!"

SHE went into her dressing-room—was gone not more than two minutes—and came back with a Spanish shawl thrown about her shoulders.

It seemed to Gretorex that she now hadn't a single feature which looked familiar—he didn't make sufficient allowance for the effect of change from the shawl alone.

Countess Nan laughed at his puzzled expression—then rubbed a face-cloth dampened with alcohol along the corners of her mouth, the sides of each nostril, the corners of the eyes and the inner corners of the socket-bone, and the muscle just under the chin. In these places there had been touches from a grease-pencil. When she had wiped them off and tossed the shawl upon a chair, she was her charming self again.

"When I was a tot in India with Dads, we'd a lot of regimental charades and theatricals. Some of the chaps were good at it—and of course Dads was a big man in the I. S. S.; he frequ'ntly went into the bazaars made up as one sort of a 'brownie' or another. Before I was sixteen, I knew a lot about disguise—not only in appearance but in manner and gestures. However—we'll get back to the subject and try a few experiments which occurred to me yesterday morning concerning this so-called Baron Grunberg. Now watch!"

Placing another drawing on the easel, she rapidly sketched a Vandyke beard around the chin, lengthening the mustache until it covered the upper lip. Instead of the slightly bald forehead and closely-trimmed hair, she drew the hair with a three-months' length, waved down over the forehead and one ear—sticking out slightly above the ears. There were no other changes—just longer hair, farther down, and the chin-beard. Gretorex had been sitting just back of her left shoulder as she worked. He gave a low whistle of amazement:

"Well—I'll be darned! I suppose it's only the trick of your sketching—yet I'd swear I interviewed that same man at the Savoy last month! Sergius Molnakoff, a big Russian financier—here in London for a conference with leading bankers."

"Wait a bit!" She reached over for a photograph from a pile on the desk. "This the chap?"

"Sure is—just as he looked in his suite at the Savoy! I see you've written his name on the back."

"We label anything like that when we get hold of it. All those photos were taken from my private files in the other room. The Marquess, Earl Lammerford and

"I'll be darned! I'd swear I interviewed that man last month—a big Russian financier!"

Prince Abdool each have their own private equipment of files. It's a necessity—meeting and knowing as many people as we do, all over the world. Now compare Molnakoff with Grunberg and tell me how they strike you."

"I'd swear they were the same man—absolutely. And yet that simply can't be."

"That's what I made these sketches for to find out. I fancied yesterday morning, when I saw Grunberg hobnobbing with a stanch Left Winger of the Labor Party like Michael Finney, that he might be a big enough chap to be dangerous here in London. Let's use another of the sketches and try a diff'rent slant."

THIS time, she made the cheeks a trifle fuller, explaining as she worked that chewing-gum placed between the teeth and the cheek would produce the same contour outside. The face was clean-shaved; the hair closely shingled *en brosse*, and receding considerably from the forehead. Tiny strokes of a very light-colored grease-pencil along the edges of both eyelids would give the eyes an appearance of being piggishly squinting. She rubbed high-lights on the lids to show this effect—and on the brows, saying that the same pencil rubbed into the eyebrow would make it almost disappear. A broader stroke at each nostril made the nose stand out with a bulbous effect.

"Hmph! . . . . I don't see how the devil you do it! I'd swear the man, as you have him now, is Caspar Turoly—the Hungarian politician and socialist."

"What makes you fancy he isn't?"

"Oh, come, Marchioness! One man can't be half a dozen men—can he?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out! Here's a picture of Turoly taken in Budapest by a Hungarian photographer—and autographed—when Turoly was advertising himself politically for some reason or other. Compare the two. One man *could* be half a dozen easily enough—and the more dif-

ferent personalities he got away with the more influence he'd exert among as many diff'rent classes of people. Because of that, the more dangerous he would be if he mixed up in underground political intrigue. We'll try one more resemblance that I've in mind." She picked up another sketch and commenced altering it as she talked. "You see, John—when anything turns up which makes me suspicious of any particular person, about the first thing I do is study their features and facial contour as it is just over the bone, without any trimmings of hair or beard. I don't know I'm doing it, at first—but when the features are thoroughly fixed in my memory, I begin to see them as they would look with the simplest changes—the ones easiest to make yet most diffic'lt to detect in any but a very strong light. Well, as Grunberg and Finney stood talking near my car, I wondered how the man would look with a Vandyke—and instantly Sergius Molnakoff flashed through my mind. Then I mentally shaved Grunberg, gave him fuller cheeks—and there stood Turoly, the Hungarian. Then I imagined him this way, and got—well, who?"

"Vladimir Bojeska—the socialist editor in Warsaw! I interviewed him when he came here as a newspaper-man in January; he seemed to be hunting out every socialist he could find in the city. All of the radical newspapers featured him with half-tone cuts, front page, as one of the greatest friends of humanity in the world. He certainly had opportunity enough to meet the scum of the city in that particular line!"

"And very likely plan with them something which is going to be mighty unpleasant for law-abiding people—mighty dangerous for any civilized governm'nt. If he's the man I'm convinced he is, he'd be in touch with our very worst element here, as the Polish editor, Bojeska. If he's gradually building up to a climax some great murderous calamity, it would require considerable financing—which as Molnakoff, a Russian financier, he'd have unusual facilities for putting through. If he's gradually fetching into the United Kingdom an army of venomous radicals to spread all through the Labor Party and poison its reserve of common-sense, as Turoly, the Hungarian political, he'd have them at his beck and call, any time. Finally—a wealthy Polish Baron would have an *entree* almost anywhere here—which would be most useful in getting whatever information he was after. Point is—what *is* he after?"

"Wonder if the C.I.D. mightn't help a bit—shadowing him and Finney," Gretorex suggested.

"Sir James Baldwin would do pretty much anything we asked of him—but, after all, he's accountable to a Labor Governm'nt—they might ask for his resignation if they found some of their members being shadowed. I fancy the good old Foreign Office is still our best bet. The Cabinet talked some about cleaning out everything savoring of secret diplomacy, and abolishing the Secret Service altogether. But they ran up against so many ugly complications in a few months—so many leaks of confidential information to foreign chancelleries—that they decided it wasn't practical to hamper the Departm'nt too much. There are several good men left in the F.O.—I fancy three or four of them can easily get leave for a few weeks—and have a shot at this Grunberg proposition. I've the feeling that something rather sickening is being planned with regard to Parliam'nt in some way. The Reds shout and preach against it as much as they do against the churches in Russia. All civilized governm'nts are the first targets in their activities."

"BY the way—how much of this may I give Mr. Sunderland?" Gretorex asked.

"Tell him you have fairly convincing proof that Baron Grunberg, Sergius Molnakoff, Vladimir Bojeska and Caspar Turoly are one and the same man—that you've reason to believe Grunberg is hatching some plot against the Governm'nt which centers around the Parliam'nt buildings—that Finney took him up on the roofs as an engineer int'rested in Barry's work, but that he's not an engineer and certainly had some other motive in getting up there. Sunderland can have his men digging into Finney and Grunberg in any way he chooses as long as he doesn't publish anything prematurely. We must get at all the details of whatever plot they're blocking out without letting them suspect that we know anything about it—what we must not do is scare them into dropping this and perhaps figuring out something even worse. I fancy he'll understand. But don't mention to him about my knowledge of disguise or make-up—that mustn't get about at all! You can dig out photos of the four men from the 'morgue' in the editorial rooms and show them to him for close comparison. If Sunderland happens to be anything of an artist himself, he'll see the possible resemblances."

SOMEWHAT to the American's surprise, when he reported after leaving Park Lane, Sunderland directed:

"Tell me everything Her Ladyship is willing to have you tell, Gretorex—and don't skip anything. What's it all about?"

The American started with his meeting Countess Nan in the Strand and what both had been doing since. He laid four pictures on the editor's desk—stating his conviction that they were all the same man.

Sunderland compared them closely for a while, in silence.

"Aye—it'll be possible enough! But—my word! Considerin' the bounder's activities in each impersonation during his visits to London, they're likely to make trouble in every direction—if there is really a connection! But what can they do on the roofs of the Parliam'nt buildings, or any other part of 'em? Guy Fawkes, back in 1606, stowed a lot of gunpowder under the old Parliam'nt building—I think it was St. Stephen's Hall at that time—was going to blow up the King and Parliam'nt on November fifth—and would have done it if he hadn't been caught going into the vaults the night before. But that sort of thing couldn't happen in these days, for Barry's buildings are ten times the size of the old ones. The Germans tried to bomb 'em during the recent war, but didn't succeed—and aërial bombing wouldn't be attempted now because the planes or dirigibles would be too certainly spotted and reported. I fancy there'll not be a public building in the world better policed than those at Westminster. Of course—whether these four persons actually are one man or not—I can and will have each of them kept under close observation. Our syndicate editors in Warsaw and Budapest will be only too pleased to report the movements of Bojeska, Molnakoff and Turoly, every day. We've no news-sheets in Russia because the Commissars wont pay for the plants they stole during the revolution—but some of our best men are now working on the Soviet sheets—getting information out to us when they can do it without being shot. *H-m-m*—this bounder is now in London as Baron Grunberg, eh? Vouched for by the Polish Legation! Know where he's stoppin' at present? He's been reported at the Piccadilly—but I doubt if that's his regular diggings. Too public for a fellow like him."

"I followed those men to the Crown in Trafalgar Road, South East—not far from the Grand Surrey Canal," Gretorex replied. "Grunberg has a suite of three rooms on the third floor—next to the top. There's no lift, so I imagine the fourth-floor rooms aren't always occupied—not all of them, at least."

"Fire-escapes, I suppose?"

"One—on a narrow alley at the side of the building. The window of Grunberg's living-room opens on it. Back of that is a little transverse hall at the rear of each floor, with a window at the end opening upon the escape."

"Then if you booked any of those top-floor rooms, you could get out on that fire-escape any time through the little hall? And being on that narrow alley between buildings on either side, nobody would see you at night—you might even get into his room during the day if he was out. But you'd best not risk that. What you might find in the way of evidence wouldn't be worth enough to pay for the risk of arrest—a fellow of that sort isn't leaving anything important in his luggage, though he might put an envelope or two in the hotel safe on the ground floor. Fancy you'd best go down there and book a room at once, Gretorex—that's the most likely place for his conferences with radicals and Laborites—near enough the East End—yet respectable enough for a man of some prominence who prefers rather secluded diggings. I fancy we'll find that he's booked at the Piccadilly, also—for meetings with a more ceremonious lot."

AFTER paying a brief visit to Park Lane, where the Marchioness introduced him to a couple of pleasant F.O. men who had no appearance of secret-service operatives, Gretorex told them of Grunberg's suite in Trafalgar Road and arranged a few recognition passwords with them in case they met in the dark—though it was their belief that they'd pick up more by shadowing anybody who came there for a talk with the man.

That evening Gretorex was on the fire-escape outside of the Baron's living-room window when Grunberg and Finney came in after dining at the Piccadilly. Half an hour later the two were joined by a couple of men from the East End—respectable enough to present a decent appearance anywhere, and with sufficient education to carry it off—but whose remarks betrayed decidedly unconventional activities. Each seemed to be a man of influence in his own particular locality. In a few moments the larger man got down to business.

"From what we've already talked over, Baron, there shouldn't be much difficulty in making all the preparations you've suggested, at a certain date to be communicated later. There are men enough now quartered in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh—sent here by Turoly and smuggled in by us all along the Norfolk Broads—to seize the railway terminals and motor-lorry depots—and, with a reasonable amount of help from the townspeople affiliated with us, bottle up the milit'ry, naval and police forces in their own quarters. But—where do we go from there? What will be done from your end?"

"*Attendez,* Murgatroyd! Suppose when you are ready to do that—can be sure of pulling it off at an hour's notice—that the Government is suddenly paralyzed—put in a condition where there are no responsible heads available to take charge or direct any sort of action. Eh? Then you carry out your end of the plan. Afterward—you send delegates from every district in the country to form a People's Parliament—run everything *for* the masses and *by* the masses. Do you begin to see it? The whole country will be actually in your power—the army, navy and police helpless. You form your own army and police as you go along—arm them from the supply depots which must surrender to you."

"Do you fancy you'll have no opposition from the conservative element—and from the big middle class of commercial folk? You're not by way of suggestin' that we throw the whole country into unemployment, are you?"

"On the contrary! Employment for everybody—wage fixed and work allotted by the People's Parliament—on an equal-sharing basis—"

"That would be an endless job, with half the people starving before you could manage it—and, in any event. reducin' everybody to a dead level of the poorest class—no chance for the skilled workman to get a wage that'll keep him in comfortable living with a few luxuries. No, Baron—we'll not abolish the employin' class in my day or yours—not in the United Kingdom, at least. Your People's Parliam'nt may be quite all right, I fancy—they'll pass bills to provide jobs for the unemployed—Governm'nt work of some sort if need be. We'll go with you along that road an' seize control if we can. But we must know how you propose to paralyze the existin' Governm'nt so it can take no action!"

"If I tell you that—and a hint of it gets out—you and I, with every other leader in the U.K., will be arrested for high treason—sent down for long terms of imprisonment. You need only agree to this: On a certain day you will receive word to hold your men in readiness for action that night—midnight—each man having explicit directions as to where he is to go and what he must do. But you need not stir a foot unless you get word that Westminster is in our hands. Three minutes after Big Ben has struck eleven there will be four additional strokes at two-second intervals. If we find any real opposition, those four strokes may come at midnight or one o'clock—but when you hear them you are to act at once. We will broadcast from 2LO after we take possession of the Savoy Hill Station—previously notifying our men throughout the country what wave to listen in on every night. Your lot can agree to this, can't they?"

"Aye—that's fair enough. If you don't pull it off up yon, we do nothing until some other plan is worked out. If you do—we're ready to back you promptly."

GRETOREX had been so absorbed in what he was hearing that he had shifted one foot and most of his weight, in a squatting position, to a rusted iron slat in the floor of the fire-escape. Suddenly this broke in two places—the broken piece of metal clanging noisily as it glanced from the two balconies underneath. The instant he felt the first gritting snap, the American rolled over on his side—pulled himself up silently—and was through the window of the little hall before Grunberg ran up the shade and opened his own window to look out. By dodging back to the service-stairs at the rear, Gretorex had just reached the top on his own floor, when Finney threw open the Baron's door and ran to the head of the main stairway, looking down. There was nobody in sight. Back in the room, the four men looked at each other questioningly. With their window shut, the noise had been considerably subdued.

"What do you fancy that could have been, Grunberg?" Finney asked.

"Sounded like a bit of loosened railing—or possibly a metal hook from the roof-coping—hitting against the two lower balconies as it fell—there was no sound from this balcony at all."

"Could anyone have been listening on this balcony?"

Men in police uniforms started to throw gas-bombs—but were caught by masked figures and knocked senseless.

"I doubt it. If there was, he'd only have caught an occasional word through the glass—we were talking in low tones. But I'm booked in this house under another name, and nobody knew you two were coming here tonight—so what object would anybody have in listening? When you go out, tell the taxi-driver to lose anyone who may be following him."

When Murgatroyd and his companion left the hotel neither of the men in a taxi farther down the street bothered about following them—they had recognized both men when they went in. But one of the watchers went into the hotel and watched his chance to get upstairs unobserved. Waiting until Finney and the Baron went out shortly afterward, he found a mop and pail in the porter's closet on that floor—filled the pail—and was mopping the slats of the fire-escape when Gretorex came down to close the hall window and discovered him.

"Who the devil— Oh, I say! Lovely weather, old chap!"

He caught a laughing whisper in reply:

"Balmy, Yank—perfectly balmy!"

Then the mysterious stranger crawled in and closed the window silently—put back mop and pail where he got them—the two afterward going down stairs and along toward the Old Kent Road, the taxi having left in pursuit of the Baron. At the next corner the F.O. man pulled a six-inch strip of rusty iron slat from his pocket and held it up for Gretorex to see, under the arc-light, as they waited for a cab.

"Unless you'd like this for a souvenir, old chap, I'll just chuck it into the gutter—couldn't leave it anywhere about the hotel, you know. I was in the alley when it dropped, lookin' up at a dark something on that third-floor escape."

"Was this what broke off? . . . . By Jove! I hadn't more than a split second to get through that hall window—if my leg had gone through the hole I'd never have made it! What the deuce were you doing out there with the mop?"

"Removin' the scratches from your shoes on those rusty slats. Grunberg couldn't tell in the dark whether anybody'd been out on that fire-escape or not—but he's sure to look in the morning. He'll see the hole where the slat broke through, to be sure, an' look along the alley for the piece. Not finding it anywhere, he'll con-

clude it was something else made the noise. He'll know that anyone listening out there would have scratched that rust in places—but I fancy I made a clean job of it. Did you get anything of importance?"

"You can judge for yourself." Gretorex repeated what he'd heard.

"My word! I doubt if we'd convince the Home Secretary of any real danger from even the Left Wing of his own party—he'd never believe there are enough foreign radicals in the country to be of real danger. But fortunately the Commander-in-Chief of the Army is an old-time Conservative, accustomed to handling emergencies. He has the authority to order details and shifts of troops wherever he considers it advisable. We can put Sir James Baldwin of the C.I.D. in position to get evidence which he will act upon, no matter who objects—he's fully aware of the danger in letting an army of Reds get hold of the railway terminals and lorry-depots—which means the food-supply in all the cities. But how the deuce are we to know *when* to guard these points? We can't keep details of soldiers and police around them all the time!"

Gretorex nodded.

"I don't know that any more than you do, Colby—but I've got what feels kinda like a hunch. Look here! . . . . Anything which paralyzes the Government and leaves it without any leaders capable of directing matters means something serious happening at Westminster—something which puts the House of Commons and the Cabinet out of business within a minute or two. Dynamite would do it; any sort of bombing might. Now—seems to me every Member in the Labor Party and some of the Liberals as well are certain to get a warning about keeping away from Parliament buildings on that particular night—they're not fools enough to hurt any of their own crowd. So that if you chaps and we newspapermen nose about for hints or rumors of something like that, we're quite likely to pick up a date somewhere. Then we can take measures to handle it."

WHEN they put this up to the Trevors in Park Lane—with all the details of the evening's adventures—Gretorex's suggestion was commended—the Marquess improving upon it somewhat by saying they should hint the possible danger to a few of the conservative Members who could and would keep silence until the zero night came around.

These members might easily pick up a whisper or two in the House—meaningless, unless one knew its association in advance—and pass it along. None of them could figure out what sort of attack was contemplated. The mystery shrouding the whole proposition was too intangible to get a point anywhere for speculation.

We now consider the activities of two young men who were duly licensed radio-amateurs with the privilege of transmitting code on a restricted band of short waves—power limited to one kilowatt—and broadcasting speech on any wave-band above two thousand meters during certain restricted hours. One of them occupied a top-floor room in Felix Street, Lambeth—the other, a similar room near the east end of Romney Street, Pimlico, on the opposite side of the Thames. One of them was directly east of the House of Commons—the other, a little west of south from it—bearing 188 degrees, to be exact. Each man had upon the roof over him two aërials running north and south—east and west. Each had in his living-room a nine-tube receiving-set with a night-range of three thousand miles or more, a big cone speaker on the wall, a transmitting equipment for both code and voice, and a radio-compass.

For nearly a year these two young men—not acquainted as far as their neighbors knew—had been carrying on the usual amateur experiments—gossiping through the air at night with other amateurs. Their regular call-letters were known to hundreds throughout the country who never had heard them mentioned by name or knew their street addresses.

On the first very foggy night after Grunberg's conference in Trafalgar Road, Walworth, both of these amateurs picked up a code message from some point due east of them on the German border of Belgium, which when decoded read:

Dropping in for social call and location-survey. Expect us about eleven. 8-188 degrees. 90-270 degrees. —U-X-2-U.

At 10:30 P.M. they fixed the other station, by the strength of its occasional signals on two thousand nine hundred meters, as approximately over Dover; twenty minutes later, over the Isle of Dogs. Since 10:45 Lambeth had been steadily sending a string of five dots with a two-second interval—and Pimlico had been sending dashes. There were a few people in the city who thought they heard an airplane

Noticing Molnakoff's condition, the two got him to his feet and supported him into their hostess' study.

motor somewhere over Southwark—yet knew that none but the Croydon ships would be aloft in such weather. As far as motor-noise went, there wasn't a sound as the time approached 11 P.M. In one of the gondolas under a long dark mass up where the fog was a bit thinner, three men were modulating the code-clicks from a big cone-speaker and straining their eyes over the divisions on a radio-compass dial. One of them said:

"Lambeth's signals equal strength with Pimlico—one hundred and ninety-five degrees. We're exactly over Felix Street. Give the propellers six reverse turns to stop the headway. Pimlico's dropping very slowly—one-ninety-two. Looks as though we'd stopped short, but there's momentum enough to carry us over, I think. Yes—Pimlico, one-ninety. Hmph! We're holding it—there isn't a breath of wind stirring! Fog seems a bit lighter in one spot on the starboard side—we're getting nearer to it—inch by inch. By Jove—it's the dial of Big Ben! We're in exactly the right position, not more than eighty feet above the roof. Let down one of the smaller grapnels! Pimlico exactly one-eighty-eight! You can let me down in a bo's'n's chair and I'll figure how much pull she's got when there's no wind!"

The man was down about twenty minutes and then signaled to be hauled up again.

"That's what I call perfect navigating! With no wind, we can hold her with a single grapnel on inch-and-a-half rope. The hose will be an additional guy. With a larger ship the stunt would be impossible. I went down as far as the tops of the Division Lobby windows—much better inlet than the gallery windows; we'll not attract notice there, and the Members are sure to make a bolt for those exits—they'll run right into the stuff. Well—let's go! And be damned careful you don't hit that Central Tower getting out!"

THE propellers were started again—but too slowly to make a noticeable noise below. The two amateurs kept up their beacon-signals until the unseen visitor was over the Straits of Dover—then returned to their usual evening gossip with other towns. The beacon-signals on two thousand nine hundred meters had not been picked up by anyone else because it was very rarely that any set-owner tuned up that high.

Before daybreak the visitors had reached an isolated spot where they moored and prepared for the deadly return trip when the order came.

THE next incident in the drama was one at which Londoners laughed until they began to wonder if it really could have a serious side. Michael Finney, M. P., was known to his associates in the House as a man who was very superstitious upon some points. One of the fads in London society that month was a clairvoyant who by clever intuition and various unguessed sources of information had made a number of very accurate prophecies—so accurate, in fact, that she was all the vogue. Some one mischievously suggested that Finney have her read his palm—which struck him so favorably that he called with a party at her studio that same night, finding nearly a hundred people there.

The studio was surrounded by a group of alcoves in which the guests sat upon divans—smoking, sipping coffee, and chatting. At the back were three doors through which a guest might slip into a passage leading to a dressing-room where he or she put on a white domino completely covering both head and figure. Disguised in this way, the client then entered the studio again by the main door from the stairway and went up to where Madame was sitting by a little red-lacquered Chinese table. She placed one of the hands upon the table and studied it—the client being forbidden to speak. Apparently she couldn't know which of the guests was Finney. She said that he had been successful in politics but was about to meet with reverses of some sort. That he would live comfortably for many years if he were careful—have enough money for his needs. He would not remain in politics. If ever he sat in the House on a really foggy night he was likely to die before morning. It wasn't what he had hoped for, by a lot, but on the whole it was good fortune except for the political side—and the warning impressed him more than he would admit. All London laughed at his taking any stock in it—being, as he was, one of his party's leaders. A brother journalist told it to Gretorex as a joke—and he went to Park Lane with it, not so sure about that—saying to the Marquess and his friends:

"I'm just wondering, sir, if this may not be the way decided upon to pass along the tip about the zero night? . . . . So as to have all the different gangs in readiness to act when the coup is pulled off."

"H-m-m—I'd say it looks that way, John. You ask Sunderland to feature the story in every edition tomorrow, with a leader referrin' to it in this way: If it's sure death for Finney to sit in the House on the first foggy night, it must be, logically, sure death for any other Member to appear on his bench that night. Advise the House to recess on foggy nights as a measure of general safety. Catch the point? Pullin' Finney's leg, apparently—but cold sober warning underneath. Sunderland does that sort of thing very well. Now—as to the real menace: The Left Wingers most certainly will be warned to keep away—at least thirty men whose absence on the benches will be noticeable. I'd say nearly all of the Laborites—and some of the Liberals—would be warned against being in their seats after a certain hour. Which is about all the tip we need—I'll spread the hint all through the Conservatives. The very second they notice the Left Wingers are absent and several of the Laborites driftin' out—they're to beat it! Every man get out of that room and the building by any door he can!"

"Suppose the doors are suddenly locked, sir?"

"I'll see there's an extra police-guard around all of 'em!"

"Suppose lethal-gas in soft containers—or even tear-gas—is unexpectedly dropped at the feet of those police? The escaping Members will run plunk into it—drop to the pavement—block the others from getting out!"

"By thunder, man, that *could* happen—too damned easily! Well—I'll see that a detail of soldiers in gas-masks, from the Chemical Brigade, get into Parliam'nt buildings every night there's any fog worth mentioning, and patrol that entire floor!"

As it happened, that decision of Trevor's was the only precaution which prevented wholesale slaughter when the pea-soup fog arrived. A few Members from all parties stayed at home upon one excuse or another. The majority, however, had too much curiosity to stay away.

The Laborites remained in their seats, yawning and heckling, until nearly ten o'clock—then drifted out by twos and threes as Members do when there seems to be nothing important up for discussion. Presently a number of the other Members slowly got up to follow them—some of them

starting around by the doors of the West Division-lobby. But in two or three minutes these came reeling back and pitched gasping upon the floor. Both lobbies were filled with lethal-gas which came pouring into the main chamber of the House.

Panic started instantly—there was a mad rush for the main entrance-doors. Four men in police uniforms started to throw gas-bombs on the floor, and run—but their wrists were caught by masked figures before more than one of the bombs dropped, and they were knocked senseless.

The soldiers in gas-masks opened every window on the rest of the floor so that the eddying draughts dispersed the gas from the single bomb before it had done much harm—and the Members were gotten out of the building—the masked soldiers picking up the unconscious ones on the floor and carrying them out—searching the doorways of the gas-filled lobbies, but not entering them. Even with masks, the stuff was altogether too thick in there. The signal from Big Ben was not sounded. As it takes four or five hours to wind up the striking mechanism, which cannot be moved by hand, two men had carried up into the tower a beam of wood six inches square and were trying to strike the rim of the bell with that—as the big bells in Osaka and Kyoto are struck by logs suspended in rope-slings. These men were taken down by the police.

All night long, press-bulletins were being cried through the streets—the morning editions were lurid. Investigation by daylight showed grapnel-marks on the roof and a length of abandoned gas-hose. The roof-pictures taken by John Gretorex were spread across the front page of his paper with scarehead demands for the instant arrest of "Baron Grunberg" as the man responsible for the atrocious outrage. But no trace of Grunberg could be found.

BY noon the Marchioness had sent for Sir James Baldwin, three editors from the most influential sheets, and Gretorex—showing the party the sketches she had made of Grunberg and photographs of the characters he had impersonated.

"The man is undoubtedly right here in London, gentlemen—but not as 'Grunberg.' He wont sacrifice his hair to make up as 'Turoly'—and he's put on a bit too much weight to appear as Vladimir Bojeska until he has dieted for a couple of months. Which leaves only the Russian financier, Sergius Molnakoff. He's had no time to *grow* the hair and beard—but he doubtless has some of those excellent French ones for use in such an emergency. Show me Sergius Molnakoff anywhere in London this evening and I'll unmask him for you! That beast must be arrested before midnight, Sir James!"

The Chief of the C.I.D. and the editors shook their heads doubtingly.

"Your Ladyship may partly convince *us* with your sketches of the man—but I fear the thing is too wildly preposterous for an English jury! That Russian financier is well known and respected here—we've not a shred of evidence against him. Nor have we against Finney—that is, proof that he knew what Grunberg was up to. He appears in the light of a good-natured, innocent catspaw. We can't arrest people without proof!"

"Suppose I prove to you that Molnakoff is Grunberg? Eh?"

"Oh—quite so! But how?"

"Find that man as soon as you can—and then take me to him!"

AND this they did so easily that it seemingly was added proof of the man's innocence. He was located at a reception-ball in one of the famous London houses. The Marquess and Marchioness of Lyonesse naturally had been invited; they put in an appearance at about ten o'clock.

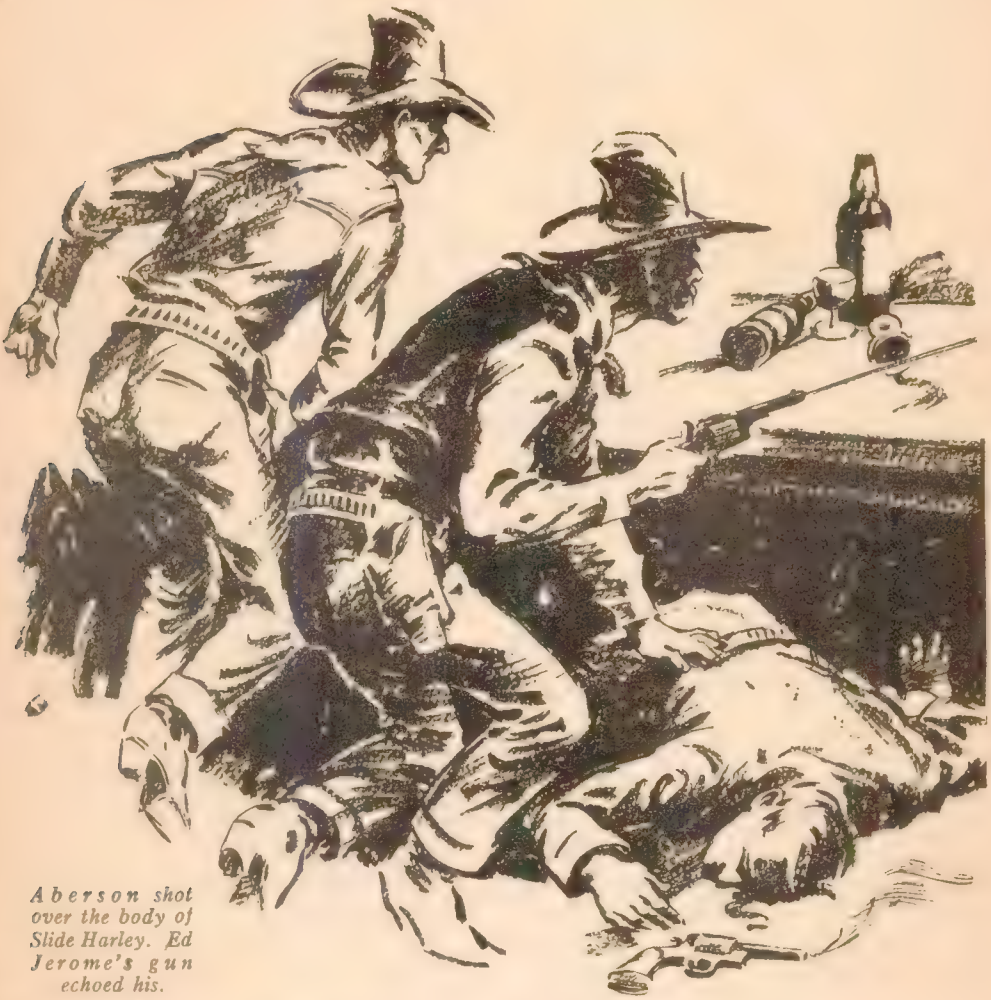
In passing Molnakoff, where he was seated with a lady on a divan, the Marchioness tripped over a rug and pitched into his lap—jabbing a hypodermic into his leg as she did so. She was profuse in her embarrassed apologies—and handsome enough to have them smilingly accepted. The financier's eyes began to grow dull; in five minutes he was unconscious.

One of the police surgeons in evening kit was close behind the Marchioness with Sir James, and had assisted her to get on her feet. Then—noticing Molnakoff's condition—the two got him on his feet and, supporting his shoulders, got him into their hostess' study, where with a towel soaked in alcohol, the Marchioness loosened the false beard and wig, revealing the features of Baron Grunberg. . . . .

Since six of the M. P.'s had been found dead in the Division lobbies, the man was hanged two months later. As Countess Nan pointed out—in a widely quoted remark:

"One murdering criminal at a time is a serious enough menace in any city—but 'four-in-one' really isn't playing the game!"

The Voice of Silent Men

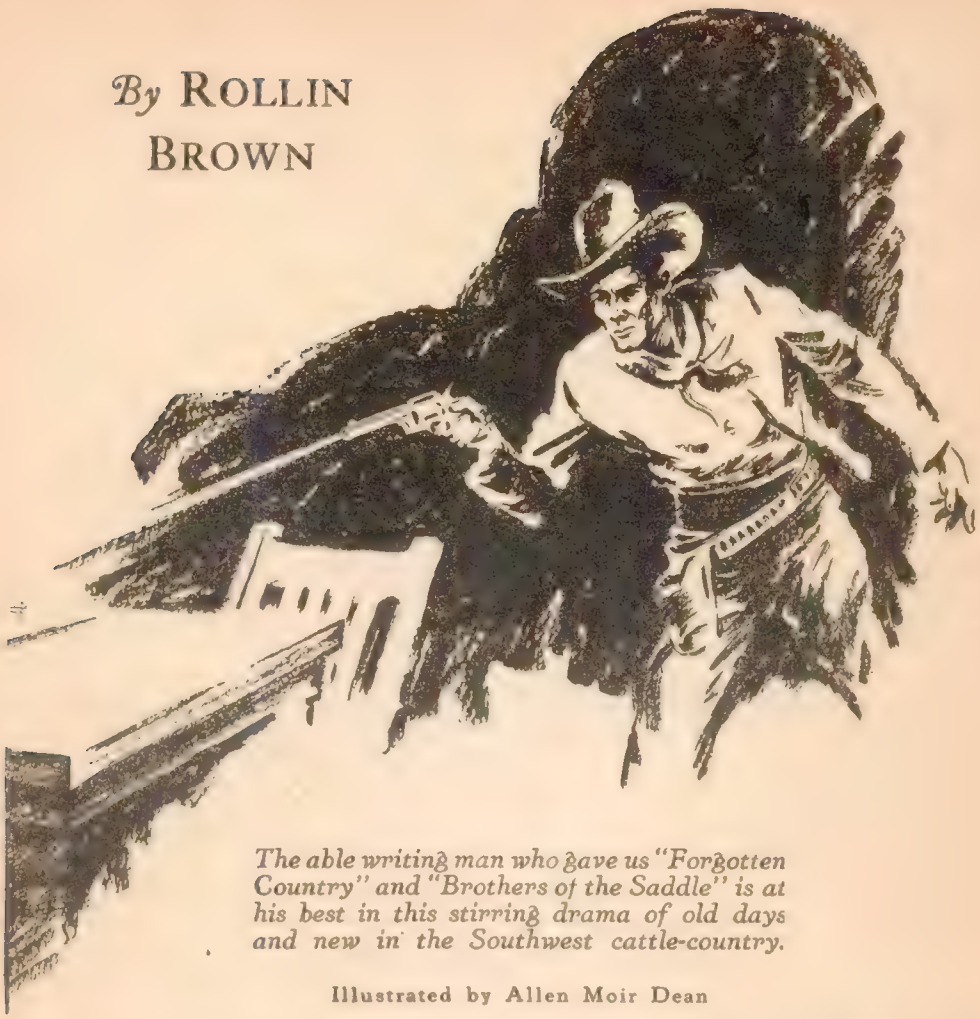


Aberson shot over the body of Slide Harley. Ed Jerome's gun echoed his.

THESE names wrote themselves in history: Juan Castro Alcorta, his kinsmen Francisco José and Arturo—later, Don Tomás Eduardo Alcorta. Gentlemen of the old Southwest, *caballeros,* brave men, fighters. . . . . Witness, then, the name of a gringo coming into things, an Ed Galloway. A hard rider, a soft-worded, silent man, an easy companion—that was the elder Ed. There was an incident in his young manhood; it never made history, but . . . .

To the east were visible the vast, desolate stretches of the Lagarto; west, above them, towered the serried ranges of the Chuchupates. The spring rodeo had swung down from the highlands and worked on the plain now, beside the yards of el Rancho de los Parros. Twenty *vaqueros,* dust, heat, the continual low bawling of the stock. There was the smell of freshly singed flesh, and the drift of four branding fires mingled with the dust. The shrill *yi-yi* of a rider sounded, as he turned some maddened animal back into the herd, or the swish of a snakelike *reata.*

By ROLLIN BROWN



The able writing man who gave us "Forgotten Country" and "Brothers of the Saddle" is at his best in this stirring drama of old days and new in the Southwest cattle-country.

Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean

"Andale! Andale!"

Don Tomás Alcorta, in soft leather, embroidered vest, tight trousers, sat his horse on the edge of the great herd and watched the scene. From time to time he made comment to his guest, Ed Galloway, who had just passed his twenty-fourth birthday at the time. Don Tomás himself sat the saddle with the dignity of the later twenties and the pride of an Alcorta.

NOW the herd grew increasingly restless. *Vaqueros* rode without command to guard the milling edge that moved toward the south plains country, the open. The herd pushed continually in that direction. Riders moved back and forth on the flank, on sweat-dripping mounts, ropes down. But the Devil himself, as Don Tomás later said, must have schemed the thing.

A wing of goaded, maddened, mountain-country steers suddenly split loose from the other side. In ten seconds they were stampeding. Other sections broke away. There was terrible confusion from what seconds before had been order. Ed Galloway, cursing a single gringo word, suddenly reined his horse about—hesitated. Then the animal shot forward as though thrown from some invisible giant hand. In the billows of the dust, twenty-five hundred head breaking under his eyes, Don Tomás didn't see it until then. . . . .

Ed Galloway rode furiously toward the very ranch-yards of Los Parros. The maddened mountain steers, turned, were sweeping down toward the yards. They crashed through a rail fence. To one side, Galloway's mount vaulted the rails. He was riding neck to neck with the wild-eyed leaders, forging ahead, cutting in.

Don Tomás, riding after him now with spurs in his horse's flanks at every stride, saw it all between clouds of dust. He was

praying to himself in words that never passed the lips. . . . . For one agonized instant he tried to lift his hand and cover his eyes, but the hand had not that much strength in it. A tiny bundle of white fluttered under his riveted gaze—a speck of white, a tiny dot of white in the ranch-yards, dancing under the frenzied stare of his gaze. . . . .

Then the tiny white bundle, like a handkerchief in the games of a *fiesta,* was snatched from the ground. It flashed up, caught by one down-sweeping hand, into Ed Galloway's saddle. Ed's pace was still furious, the stride unbroken. He rode on, swinging aside. In a great circle, leaping another fence, he turned back toward Don Tomás, who prayed his thanks now in an audible whisper. . . . . The path of the maddened band of steers afterward looked like the trail of a small hurricane through the yards, sweeping everything down before it, crushing everything that lay in the path.

THAT night Don Tomás Eduardo Alcorta gave his guest, Señor Ed Jerome Galloway, a sheet of parchment paper on which were scrolled bold, ornate lines, in Spanish.

"What's this?" asked Ed.

"It's a deed calling for a bit of Rancho los Parros. Some ten thousand acres, as you would measure it," explained Don Tomás. "*Señor, mi amigo,* it is no gift to you. No gift that I could give would repay what you did today. Understand well, *amigo*—I do not try."

Curiosity had the better of Ed Galloway, and he was reading the paper. His eyes smiled at the humor in the situation.

"Don Tomás," he said suddenly, "I take it that this deed is meant for my son. An' me an everlastin', hard-headed, dyed-in-the-wool bachelor!" Which was twenty-four years speaking. "I haven't any son. Likely never will have."

It was Don Tomás' turn to smile gently.

"My friend, you are wrong," he said. "And your son will be a *caballero* like yourself. It is all settled, all finish'—what you say? Today you saved the life of my own son." For an agonized instant Don Tomás saw again the dot of helpless white in the ranch-yard, saw it lift like a handkerchief into Ed Galloway's saddle, and his ears again could hear the pound of maddened hoofs behind. "So tonight," he continued, "I wish to make this trifling gift to the son you will some day have. Name him after yourself; nothing could be more fitting. The very land upon which this happened is specified. So it is written." . . . .

The younger Ed Jerome Galloway, who was born after the fading of that colorful century of his father's youth, often enough saw the parchment deed that gave him ten thousand acres of el Rancho de los Parros when he should attain what had been his father's age, twenty-four years—ten thousand acres, stocked with the animals that grazed the land, given all with a bow and a gesture. Young Ed liked to hear the story from his father's lips. The elder Ed had now passed the fifty mark.

"But you listen to me," the elder would say at conclusion: "I kept this paper just because it's interestin'—get me? You got no more right to that land, son, than I got to the Continent of Africa. An' less—get me? You're a youngster that's goin' to stand on his own two legs, an' if he wants a ten-thousand-acre rancho, he's a-goin' to earn it with his own two hands. That's that! An' what's more, son, even Los Parros is goin' the way of all the other old grants now'days. Split up, sold to meet taxes, expenses. I hear of it now an' then. Don Tomás sometimes writes me. Even the Alcortas, who once measured their land by the day's ride, are becomin' poor people."

Young Ed grew up, asking for that story as he would a nursery rhyme, with the parchment deed the pretty colored pictures of illustration. He was just thirteen when the elder Ed followed the boy's mother—and left nothing of the much he had once had. Young Ed was marched away to a charity school—and six months later he escaped. The only thing he took with him was a folded sheet of parchment paper from a box of childish knicknacks that no one had bothered to investigate. None of the authorities of the school ever put their fingers on him again. The boy dropped the Galloway part of his name, calling himself simply Ed Jerome, and he put a lot of distance between himself and that school.

WHEN he was twenty-four, at a time when he might have claimed what was left of Los Parros, Ed Jerome instead found himself asking for three months' back wages, owed him by the AX outfit, Larkspur Junction, Montana.

"Driftin', Ed?" asked the buckaroo boss. "Burnin' a bit more saddle-leather, huh?"

"I guess. I don't want to get hardenin' of the joints—so long in one place, y'know."

"No," agreed the boss. "By the way,

Stiffy's got a letter for you. Come this mornin'."

"You don't say?"

"Well, so long an' luck, Ed."

BUT the letter—the writing on the envelope instantly struck some familiar chord in Ed Jerome's memory. He gazed at the strange old-fashioned scroll of the words, wondering. Opening the sheet within, he knew. It was, in fact, the trembling hand of the same man who had drawn a deed on parchment one night nearly fifty years before with the bold, ornate flourish of youth.

Señor Ed Jerome,
AX Rancho,
Larkspur, Montana.
Señor amigo:

You have been difficult to trace, very difficult, since you no longer use your father's name. Yet this day the House of Alcorta must extend invitation to you, and ask for your presence at El Rancho de los Parros.

I salute you, señor.
Tomás Eduardo Alcorta.

Ed Jerome stood half an inch better than six feet in his stockings, which had been his father's height. His lean muscles had the same sinewy grace that had characterized his father. He had the same even gray eyes and shock of straight brown hair. And just as Ed Jerome was throwing one long leg over the saddle, Stiffy bore down from the AX bunkhouse again at a run.

"Hey, Ed! Somethin' funny here. Junction office jist called on the 'phone. Tellygram for Ed Jerome—*Galloway*. Who you been givin' false names to, huh?"

ED JEROME grinned. He considered. "Nobody, I reckon."

Stiffy waved a torn strip of wrapping paper. "I jotted it down here. AX Ranch, all right. Fits you, but for the Galloway part."

"Let's see what you wrote," said Ed Jerome.

Stiffy handed up the paper.

ED JEROME GALLOWAY—

SEE ME AT ABERSON RANCH AT CROCKER BEFORE GOING TO LOS PARROS STOP HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO YOU ALSO ALCORTA

CHARLES HARLEY

"Fer you?" asked Stiffy.

"I guess."

"Know this fella Charles Harley, huh?"

"No. Never heard of him," said Ed Jerome.

"Must be some mistake, then. I'll phone back."

"No. No mistake," mused Jerome. "For me, all right, but— 'Highly important to you also Alcorta.' Huh! Say, Stiffy, wonder which one of the boys would like to buy this horse of mine? I'll ride cushions—south!"

CHAPTER II

A STRIP of grass-fertile plains country, land once included in the whole by the vast Los Parros grant, stretches south some forty miles from the hill town of Crocker. To one side, from the stoops of the west ranges, the Chuchupates, the rugged foothills fall into the plain; patches of rough barranca flatten into it; scarlike cañons, ravines, arroyos twist free from the hold of the mountains and the courses become gentle across the east-sloping flat lands. Eventually dry of water, they connect like the branches of gigantic sycamores with thick white trunks that are flat, bouldered washes. The washes, in turn, finally leave the plain and are swallowed in the beginning desolation of the Lagarto.

The Chuchupates form the west wall of the plain. But the easterly boundary is the more formidable—the wall of flatness, increeping desert, finally vistas that shimmer under the rising heat-devils of daytime like some conjurer's dream of Inferno. In the end, for a hundred east-reaching miles, only drought, sand, parched barrens—the Lagarto. Men don't ride there for pleasure.

But when Sheriff George Tealing, of Crocker, found the trail of his unknown quarry hitting eastward he nodded significantly to Abel Calvin. The sun, rising swollen and red across the desert horizon, was an hour high. Thin, bluish haze still hung in the depressions of the plain, a haze of powder-dry dust from the Lagarto.

"We ought to get him *pronto*," said Sheriff Tealing with satisfaction. "Poor sort of a mount he grabbed out of Aberson's corral last night. Ridin' bareback. He don't know the country hereabouts, that's plain."

It was. From the Aberson ranch-yards, on the junction of the Los Parros and Crocker roads, where the new semi-weekly auto stage passed, the lone man had swung the saddleless mount under him south. Just at the coming of dawn his trailers had found where he had attempted to get into the Chuchupates and a blind cañon had turned him back. He had spent a good bit of time there, and the trail had finally reversed direction, striking toward the La-

garto. This much had been learned since daylight, bespeaking Sheriff Tealing's efficiency and also good luck. The Sheriff knew the lone man couldn't be far ahead.

OF the three men who had ridden beside Sheriff Tealing at dawn, two were now quartering down to the southeast, on the hope of intercepting the fugitive in that direction. Chet Dailey was one of the two; the other, a white-faced young man with strangely colorless blue eyes, was from Aberson's. He went by the name of Galloway—E. J. Galloway.

Abel Calvin, riding at the Sheriff's own side, was the Aberson foreman. Tealing had known Calvin for years; long enough, at least, to realize that something lay heavy on Calvin's mind this morning. Finally the Sheriff put a question:

"What's wrong, Abel?"

"Oh, just thinkin'," said Calvin. He savagely bit a tiny chip from a plug of chewing tobacco and thrust it into one cheek with his tongue. "Just thinkin', wonderin'. You know that story about Los Parros, I reckon. Old gift deed—ten thousand acres!" Calvin spat. "That ten thousand acres is the heart of the ranch, all that's left of Los Parros today."

Tealing nodded. His eyes, squint-lidded against the sun, watched the country ahead.

"The claimant," continued Calvin suddenly, "could kick the two surviving Alcortas—old Don Tomás and Sally—out from under the roof over their heads if he was a-minded to, I reckon. When Aberson put through that slick deal of his, fifteen years ago, he took just about all that was left of what might actually be called Alcorta land. Somethin' better'n twenty thousand acres in that deal, y'know. It's made Aberson rich, but— Say, Tealing, how does the name of Galloway strike you?"

Sheriff Tealing ignored the question. "Not much chance, Abel," he decided. "That story, that rumored deed, always has struck me as kind of rootless. I mean if there was such a deed, why hasn't it been recorded on county records, the like? A man that had that place comin' to him wouldn't be takin' no chances. Huh? He'd have things turned out in legal form, an' he'd have made himself known in person hereabouts a good long time ago."

"Uh-huh," said Calvin; "that would seem the reasonable thing. But how does the name of Galloway strike you, Sheriff?"

"If you're meanin' this dead-faced, watery-eyed bird that's been stayin' with Aberson the past two-three weeks—well, if'n he hadn't put up sich a holler about it he wouldn't be ridin' with us this mornin', if that's what you mean. In other words, I can't say I take to that feller; no more than I take to this Harley, who's also hangin' about Aberson. No reason for it. It aint nothin' definite. An' it's to be said that Galloway's a handy man with a gun. I saw him make a mighty fast play at a target the other day."

"Yeah, that's somethin' of what I mean," said Calvin. "Too handy, maybe. Just loafin' round the ranch with Aberson. Aberson, y'know, don't go to Los Parros; but twice this feller's been over there. Calls himself Galloway—E. J. Galloway, Junior. He's so always careful about havin' you remember that Junior. Tealing, just as a matter of fact, that's the name of the man who can take Los Parros."

Sheriff Tealing's eyes opened with interest. "Has this Galloway ever said anything, ever made any move that might make you think—"

"No," said Calvin. "Not to me, anyhow. What he might have told old Don Tomás, what he might have done over there, I don't know. I haven't seen Sally in weeks. Don Tomás never leaves the ranch any more; in fact, he's gettin' pretty old an' feeble. Past seventy-five, y'know. An' the way things are—me workin' as Aberson's foreman—I never ride onto Los Parros land any more."

"I know," said Tealing. But the Sheriff's shrewd eyes scrutinized Calvin's face. "Abel," he asked finally, "just what is botherin' you?"

"I told you—this Galloway."

"No, you aint told me all of it. Galloway hasn't made any claim. The name isn't so uncommon that there mightn't be one turnin' up here or anywhere else, just by chance—"

"But two of 'em!" blurted Calvin.

"Two of 'em? What th' hell are you gettin' at?"

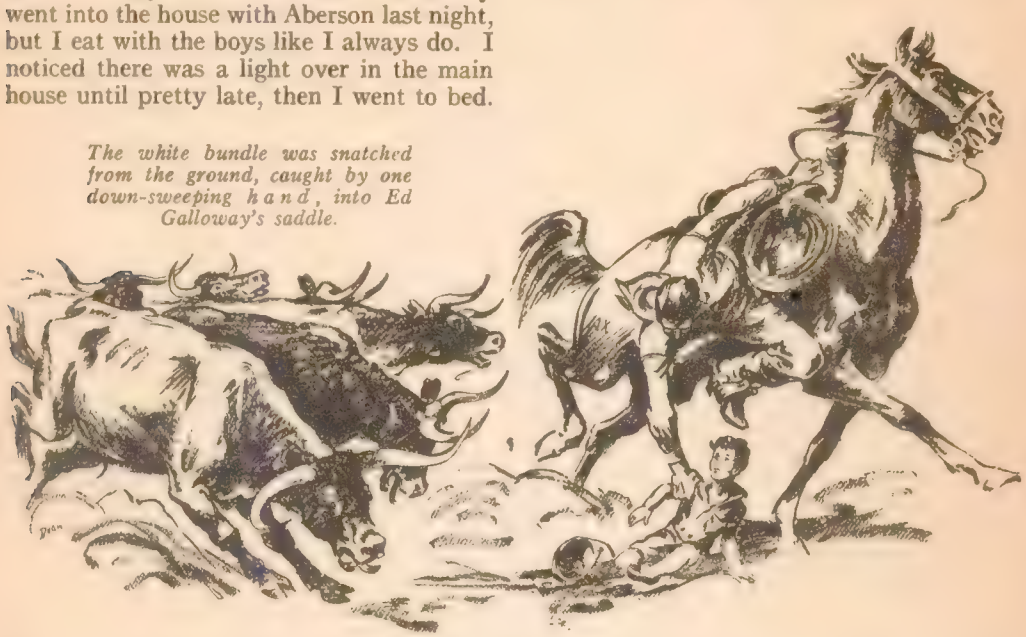
Abel Calvin didn't answer for a moment. "I'm gettin' at the fact, Tealing, that the man we're after this mornin' also told me his name was Galloway. It happened when he walked in at Aberson's last night. I was in the yards, nearly dark, saw him turn in from the road. He wanted to see Charles Harley, he said. He kind of laughed when he said it—'Tell him Galloway is here!' Just about that time Aberson come up.

. . . . . Another thing: Aberson has had a guard—two of his Mexicans—on the Los Parros road for the most of the last month. I reckon he thought I didn't know of it."

"But," stuttered Tealing, "but— Say, just what the devil are you tryin' to tell me, Calvin?"

"I'm tryin' to tell you facts," said Calvin. "Just straight facts that I seen or heard for myself. This second Galloway went into the house with Aberson last night, but I eat with the boys like I always do. I noticed there was a light over in the main house until pretty late, then I went to bed.

The white bundle was snatched from the ground, caught by one down-sweeping hand, into Ed Galloway's saddle.



. . . . . I woke up hearin' shots from over at the house an' in the yards. You know the rest."

"I know what Aberson told me at about two o'clock this mornin'," considered Tealing. "He come tearin' into Crocker in that old car of his. Pretty excited. Aberson said he'd took this feller in for the night, like he would any traveler stuck on the road. Sometime close after midnight he'd heard him prowlin' about the house, an' Aberson got up to see what it was. Found the man workin' at the safe in his office. Then the shootin'. Aberson's friend Galloway comes in; takes a hand. So does Harley. The man escapes. Grabs the first horse he can find in the corrals. No saddle. Rides, an' this Galloway tries to follow, but loses him. Looks like there was plenty of witnesses to events."

"Yeah," said Calvin. "Lot of excitement over a robber that didn't get nothin' but one old pony."

"Well, Aberson come mighty close to gettin' shot," said Tealing. "That might rile a man considerable. A bullet just grazed the right side of his skull."

"Did you notice that Galloway got hit, too?" asked Calvin. "He did. Anyhow the left side of his jaw looks like nothin' but a fist had connected with it."

The sun had risen a seemingly minute distance higher over the Lagarto as they talked; the blue haze was vanishing under their eyes. No breeze in the air. Abel Calvin rolled the softened chip of tobacco to the other cheek and spat. He lapsed into thoughtful silence.

"We'll see if there's anything underneath when we get the man ahead," said Tealing. "When he talks. But it has all the earmarks of just plain robbery, Abel. Just the surface of things often looks peculiar, y'know. A man can make most anything from a few words an' a liberal chunk of silence."

Over the lower flat country of the plain the early heat increased. It was like an invisible, oven-hot blanket. Rivulets of sweat ran down the horses' flanks, drying in salty white lines. Later the day breeze would come, fanning the hot air. But now dust, fine as powdered feather tips, alkaline, burning dry to the nostrils and mouth, lifted under the horses' bellies and hung long suspended in the air behind, a thin streamer.

Morning wore on—mid-morning. Tealing suddenly straightened in the saddle. A moment later he remarked to Calvin:

"Yonder! There's our man!"

It was the black dot of horse and rider, the tiny, uncertain, moving speck upon the landscape that the Sheriff had been expecting. The big, long-limbed sorrel under Tealing increased the pace without urging. It could be seen shortly that the man ahead was cutting for one of the flat, dry washes that traversed the plain. There was a fringe of brush along the banks—scant cover at best, but the only irregularity in the sweep of the country.

Tealing nodded to himself. After a while he gestured to the right.

HALF a mile distant, on the opposite side of the wash, Chet Dailey and the man called Galloway had angled into view. They also had sighted the fugitive and were closing in neck to neck with the Sheriff and Calvin. The man ahead didn't have a chance. At best the bank screen of brush could offer only temporary cover. Tealing had the sense of satisfaction that comes when the end is in sight, a job completed in a speedy and satisfactory manner.

He was careful in approaching the brush fringe. On the far side of the wash Chet Dailey and Galloway were in sight. They cut off escape in that direction, with the flat, bouldered, open bed of the channel under their eyes—fifty to a hundred yards of open that the man would be forced to cross, riding into their hands. Not a chance. Slowly, cautiously, Tealing and Calvin turned eastward along the bank. The situation was ideal from the Sheriff's viewpoint. Not sixty seconds later Chet Dailey shouted across the wash, gesturing:

"Aint that his horse? Jist ahead of you!"

It was. The animal had been temporarily screened from Tealing's sight. A thin, old pony, wearing the Aberson brand, saddleless, it stood in what shade a straggling mesquite threw—exhausted, head almost nosing the ground. The man had abandoned the worthless nag for his own two feet. Afoot, Tealing knew, he might better evade them for a time, but the end was just so much the more certain. A man didn't go far in this country on foot. Tealing waved his arm for Chet Dailey and Galloway to now come across and help ride the man out.

"No shootin'!" Tealing directed, his eyes falling on the colorless face of Galloway. "It wont be necessary, I reckon. An' Calvin has give me reason to want to hear what this man has to say. Keep that in mind."

The four split apart. Tealing chose to work back, west now, watchful, tense in the saddle. After about five minutes he discovered Chet Dailey ahead of him.

"This feller has just holed up on us," he told Chet. "He likely aint a hundred yards distant from some one of us right now, lyin' in under a mesquite, a boulder, somethin'. But when we flush him we got—"

The word was bitten off. From the rear two shots had sounded in trip-hammer explosion. The Sheriff and Chet Dailey looked at each other, silent for a second. Tealing swore. Then both whirled their mounts and beat back at a rapid lope. Ahead, Galloway suddenly appeared on the crest of the shallow bank. He gestured, his shoulders and mount's head visible above the ragged line of brush, then disappeared.

At the point where Tealing cut in to the bank he could not push his mount down. But from the saddle he saw only too plainly. Calvin lay stretched out in a tiny, sandy hollow of the wash below, face down. One arm was limply thrown overhead, the other under him, as he had fallen from the saddle. The riderless horse stood near by. Galloway now bent over Calvin.

Tealing suddenly flung himself from the sorrel's saddle, and leaping, falling, he went over the bank.

Calvin was dead, shot twice through the back.

"Look! He never had a chance to touch his own gun," said Galloway. "Both through the back!"

BEYOND, Chet Dailey found the place where Galloway had gestured. He rode his horse into the wash and dismounted beside Tealing, wordless, staring down. Tealing's hands opened and shut repeatedly.

"Fast work!" muttered Galloway. "The killer! Like a hawk!"

The Sheriff had a flash of memory. He remembered how fast he had seen a gun work in Galloway's hand one day, at a target. The thought vanished. Numbness gripped the Sheriff's brain. His big hands opened and closed spasmodically. He had known Abel Calvin for better than twenty years. . . . .

Possibly a minute and a half passed before Tealing thought of his own sorrel, left on the bank above. It was a premonition that struck him with the force of a blow. Gun drawn, shaking with rage now, Tealing climbed up. Seconds more—

Too late! The sorrel was some distance away, ridden at a desperate clip by the man

they sought. He had turned back toward the Chuchupates.

JUST how Galloway came to be at Tealing's side, the Sheriff never knew. He remembered mounting Calvin's horse himself, riding after the again dotlike figure astride his own sorrel. Chet Dailey had stayed with Calvin's body. The Sheriff didn't speak to Galloway.

He had thoughts of his own. Tealing had always numbered Calvin among the stanchest of his many friends. This left little thought, except for the fugitive ahead.

Galloway occasionally put in a word or two. But Tealing gave no heed. The man ahead was lost for long periods of time, but always Tealing sighted the dot-form again, against the rise of one of the far, lazy rolling crests of the upper plain. They swung south, against the Chuchupate foothills. At middle afternoon, under Tealing's heavy weight, Calvin's horse showed sign of going down, exhausted. Sweat dried suddenly on the animal's flanks and neck. Tealing looked at Galloway's mount—and spoke:

"We'll change horses. Calvin's mount will get you back to Aberson's, if you wait for the night cool."

Galloway's eyes flickered. A peculiar change came into them—the Sheriff later was to note this again. The pupils in the surrounding irises of watery blue seemed to glow like points of fire, or tiny diamonds under narrowed lids. It gave the man's pale face sudden illumination, a queer, intense, deadly appearance. He looked at Tealing now. The fingers of his right hand suddenly quivered—it was not nervousness.

Then Galloway laughed. In that instant the eyes turned pale, watery again in appearance. In that instant the face became putty, lifeless once more.

"Sure," he agreed. "Sure, Sheriff. Whatever you say."

From there the trail went into the Conejo Flats, and before sunset straight back for the Lagarto. In the Sheriff's chap pockets was jerky; a quart canteen hung at the saddle-horn. Tealing was alone. He didn't care. Into the Lagarto—only one thought:

Get the man who killed Abel Calvin!

CHAPTER III

IT was more than three days after he had taken the trail from Aberson's that night, that Sheriff Tealing looked down into the Seeley Basin, sixty-some miles northeast of the town of Crocker, north of the northerly end of the Lagarto. The Seeley was new homestead country that was being slowly settled up. Duty hadn't called Tealing up here for years; it was, in fact, out of his district, and the better half of the basin lay in another county. Roads came from there.

The bones of Tealing's big body seemed to stand out through his clothing. Even his weathered face had been blistered. He shambled forward when he walked to ease his mount; he dozed and swayed dizzily when the saddle was under him. His lips were swollen, cracked and dry. His beard had grown to a half-inch thick stubble.

THERE was a tiny, unnamed seepage spring that Tealing knew of in the Lagarto, on the westerly side stretches. He had planned to water there, believing, as he did, that the man he wanted had set out to ride straight across the desert, in the end escaping to the fertile lands more than a hundred miles east. But somehow the fugitive had found the spring first; it was even possible that the Sheriff's big sorrel had led him to it. The Sheriff's defeat after that had been so simple that a child might have turned the trick.

The seepage pool had been roughly walled by cow-men who occasionally traveled that far out in the desert after a rainy spring. So filling the sorrel's belly, his own, and the canteen that had been on Tealing's saddle, the man had simply broken down the wall and let the pool spread into the sand. The spring was dry when Tealing arrived. Walling it up again, half a day's drip hadn't been sufficient to more than wet his mount's lips. The animal had to have water at this point, if Tealing hoped to follow to the east rim of the desert. Here, simply, was stark defeat. The Lagarto had defeated him, and a man couldn't buck the Lagarto. Already the man he sought had hours of start and the cool of night was coming, which would carry him through. For Tealing, who sought the man ahead with a single intensity of emotion and physique, there was nothing else to do—he turned toward the Seeley, actually wondering if he could make that. . . . .

Where the hills dropped down on the southerly end of the basin Tealing dismounted now and walked again. It was several hours past sunup. Tealing staggered. He almost had to drag his mount. They were an exhausted, desperate pair, the man and

horse, coming down off the hills toward the first of the little dry-land clearings below. With help in reach, Tealing felt his great-bodied strength almost gone.

In the clearing below was an unpainted, rough board shack. To one side of the shack stood a homemade windmill tower. A creaking fan revolved slowly on the tower, the stem rattled and a tiny dribble of sour water ran into the trough placed below. A wire corral was built beside the trough. No stock was in sight.

BUT in the half-shaded doorway of the shack, tilted back in a chair sleeping, with his face to the south, sat a young man. He breathed exhaustedly in his sleep; there was the deadness of exhaustion in his posture; the slack, lean muscles of his face showed it, too. But he was freshly shaved that morning. Dark, tumbled hair fell about his face. A pair of buzzing flies crawled over his wrists and hands, and sometimes the hands twitched. There were sunken hollows under the closed eyes.

The chair tilted down after a while. By some subconscious effort of will the young man slowly forced his eyes open. This had been going on at intervals since the first light of dawn that morning. The eyes, finally open, were bloodshot, staring and gray in color. He pushed fists into the sockets. Slowly his gaze swept the hills to the south, and the eyes suddenly riveted on the specks that were Sheriff Tealing and his mount.

The young man shook himself slowly then, after a moment, and stood erect. He staggered back into the shack and thrust his whole head deep into a pail of water, to push sleep away. He shook the water from his eyes, then returned to the doorway.

"What a horse that sorrel was!" he told himself. "But, Ed Jerome, I reckon everything rests on you alone now. Just you, right now!"

But it was late afternoon of that day before Tealing actually gained a first impression of the young homesteader he had stopped with in the Seeley. The Sheriff remembered water, food, knew that he had had brief hours of sleep—for Tealing had collapsed once the pace was reined, like an over-ridden mount. The young man had cared for him.

Opening sleep-stiff eyes now, turning on a cot, the Sheriff watched the young man, who was cooking an early supper at the other end of the shack. He saw youth; he saw a lean, tall form; sinewy, slow muscle that yet gave the impression of catlike agility and strength underneath. When the man turned the Sheriff looked into a sunburned, lean face; a slow, steady smile directed on himself; even, steady gray eyes under a tangled head of dark brown hair. Tealing found liking for the man instantly.

Then the Sheriff sat up in bed. He felt old, stiff as old leather, drawn; but he remembered only too well what circumstance had brought him here. Tealing never overlooked a bet.

"A man on a big, rangy sorrel," he said. "Just a chance the Lagarto might have turned him back, too, in the end. Big sorrel. You seen him?"

"Tall, long-legged sorrel," considered the young man. "One rear white stocking. Yeah, I seen him—sunset yesterday."

"What!" The Sheriff was out of bed, getting into his boots. Again he was silent, considering, planning what would be a next move. He asked finally:

"You got fresh stock here?"

The young man nodded. "Three ponies. They're runnin' just yonder in the hills."

"Get 'em!" commanded Tealing.

Without a word the young man turned, picked up his hat, took a hair rope from a peg and left the shack. Half an hour later he returned. From the doorway Tealing saw him through the slant light of full sunset. He drove two skinny ponies ahead, but the young man himself mounted a long-legged, gaunt sorrel. He drove the ponies toward the wire corral. Tealing was out there to meet him, recognizing his own sorrel instantly. But the young man spoke first.

"I reckon," he said, "that I'm sittin' on that sorrel you spoke of, mister. Whoever the rider was he must have decided he needed a new mount. He took my best pony, a little roan, and left this."

For seconds Tealing didn't speak. Then he growled:

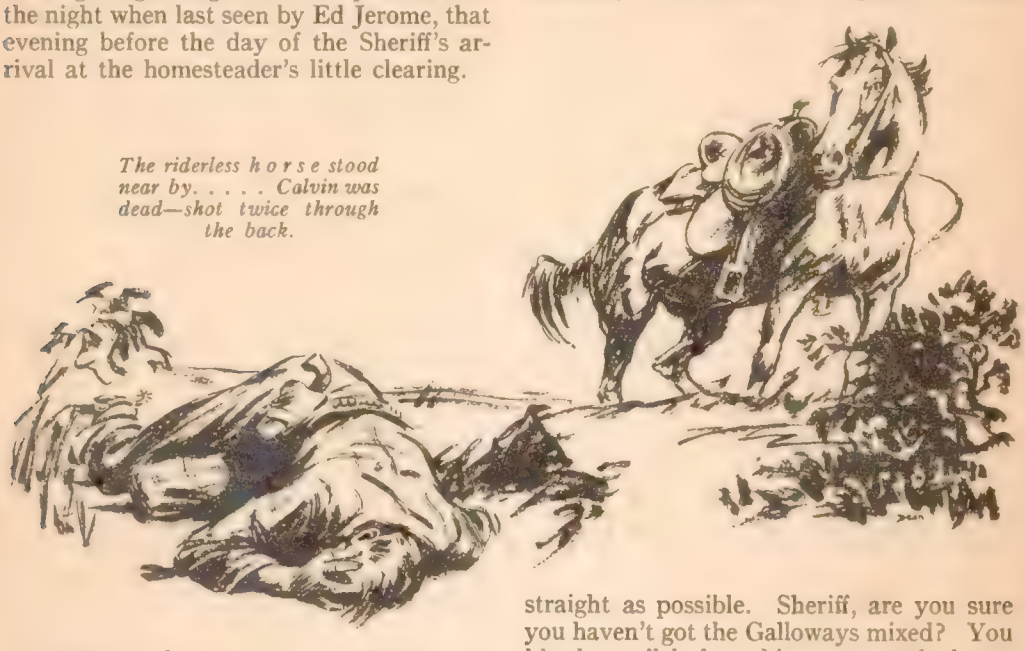
"He would! Your best. That's the man! We'll get on north a way tonight."

CHAPTER IV

THE sleepy hill town of Crocker. A week later, to the day, since Tealing had started on the chase that had led him criss-cross, zigzag along the plain under the Chuchupates, Conejo Flats, straight back into the Lagarto, north from the desert water-

hole and finally through the Seeley Basin. The chase that had brought the stanch Abel Calvin's life to a close in its opening hours. That was the dominant thought still in the Sheriff's brain. After the Lagarto Tealing had spent some fifty hours in the Seeley, with the young homesteader, Ed Jerome, riding with him. But the killer Tealing sought might have evaporated into the night when last seen by Ed Jerome, that evening before the day of the Sheriff's arrival at the homesteader's little clearing.

The riderless horse stood near by. . . . . Calvin was dead—shot twice through the back.



Tealing had made it into Crocker at late morning, leading the greater part of the distance back from the Seeley in the cool of night. For the first time in days he had reached a telephone, and he swiftly called the Sheriff's office over in Arajo County. No results; but three counties had the description of Calvin's killer. Chet Dailey had attended to that days before. Yet even in this, as he talked to the Arajo officer, Sheriff Tealing found dissatisfaction. The description, such as it was, would have fitted any two or three men out of ten, say.

"Why, this killer," began Tealing, "why, he's—he's—" There Tealing halted. What was he? What was the description of the man who had killed Calvin? Tealing himself hadn't been close enough to get it at any time. Calvin had said things that morning, given him an impression, without words or detail to substantiate it. Tealing ended by bellowing into the phone:

"What name did Chet Dailey give you?"

"Name unknown," said the muttering deputy's voice on the other end of the wire.

"Unknown! Unknown, hell—it was Galloway! Galloway, hear? Put that down. Did Chet Dailey say where he got that description?"

"Yeah," said the voice. "I talked to Dailey. He mentioned Aberson. Dailey, as I remember, said he'd waited until he'd seen both Aberson an' a stranger named Galloway; to be sure of gettin' things straight as possible. Sheriff, are you sure you haven't got the Galloways mixed? You hit the trail before things got worked out. Two of 'em like that, y' know—"

With a crash of his fist Tealing broke the connection. He cursed softly. Then the question occurred to him: Had Calvin said the man's name was Galloway? Or was that an impression and nothing more?

"I'm right there anyhow," he muttered. "That was the thing troublin' Calvin. Two Galloways! Not that a name is anything to go by."

Tealing called the office over at Whitefall Junction. The man over there was more voluble, but his information was as worthless as that of Arajo County. Sheriff Tealing sat back and thought for a moment. In that moment Chet Dailey entered the little office built in the front of Tealing's house without the formality of a knock.

CHET was a man in the late thirties, habitually calm in manner and deliberate. When not yet out of his 'teens he had ridden for the old Los Parros. He had known Don Tomás when the old man still attended his own roundups. He had known

the son of Don Tomás, before his premature death ten years or so ago. He remembered the day that old Don Tomás' granddaughter, Sally Alcorta, had come into the world, and it had been Chet who rode for the doctor the day her mother died. Sally's mother, Chet often told, had been a stage favorite of the Pacific Coast when the son of Don Tomás married her. Sally had the same sort of beauty her mother had had, he said. In fact, Chet Dailey could ramble on and on by the hour, never repeat, and in it all was woven the old glamour, glory and beauty of the old House of Alcorta.

Yet Chet Dailey was just what he looked on the surface—a cow-poke, who had had sense enough to strike out on his own before he was too old, whom wisdom had ripened by easy stages. Chet scoured the country for "feeders" in the spring, and a year and a half later, at fall, turned out good-sized, grass-fat beef from the upper Chuchupates. He never wore other costume than a faded cotton shirt and saddle-greasy hip overalls; a battered sombrero, of course. Chet tilted the battered hat back on his forehead now.

"Hell, George! You look kinda worn an' thin," he greeted.

TEALING hadn't spoken. He did so now without preamble. "Where did you get this broadcasted description? It's so good it would fit about every other man you'd meet. Huh?"

"From Aberson. From Galloway," Chet informed him. "Who else would I get it from? Who else got close enough to get any sort of description? Best I could do."

"Didn't neither tell you his name?" barked Tealing.

"Neither knew it."

"Didn't know it!" muttered the Sheriff. "How come? Calvin did. If that killer told Calvin his name first off, why not to them, too? Huh?"

"Well," considered Chet, "if'n he was plannin' to pick Aberson's safe that night, like Aberson caught him—"

"Yeah," cut in Tealing. "He'd 'a' said nothin' to Calvin either—not that a name isn't the easiest thing to change in the world. But this man called himself Galloway. Galloway—hear?"

"So?" said Dailey with mild surprise. "We're havin' kind of a plague of Galloways then. Worse'n a 'hopper year! It strikes me it's a shame we can't put out a strychnine mash for Galloways, same as works on grasshoppers. It's a shame—"

"Meaning what now?" grunted Tealing.

"Meaning I'd like to run a gun down this here Galloway's throat," decided Chet Dailey. "An' I don't mean the one that got away neither—I mean Aberson's friend."

"Yeah? What's he done?"

"Oh, nothin' much. Nothin' much! Galloway just walked into Los Parros the other day an' told old Don Tomás he'd give him ten days to vacate. Just like that! He had just decided he might as well take ten thousand acres of as good cow-land as there is west of the Lagarto, ranch-houses, stock an' whatnot. Sure! An' kick the old man an' Sally out with a ten-day notice. He says Aberson is interested in buyin' the place off him. . . . . Yeah. I reckon Los Parros, stock an' sich, is worth somewhere in the neighborhood of two hundred thousand dollars on a quick sale today. That's about all. So he'll just take it, kickin' old Don Tomás out with nothin'. All because Don Tomás was once fool enough, generous enough— Oh, hell, you know the story."

"But—but," stuttered Tealing, "but has he got the papers, all that? He aint that Galloway!"

"Sure he is. Sure he's got 'em," said Dailey. "You don't think he, or any other man, would have the guts to pull that unless he could show he was right, do yuh? An' what if the deed is nearly fifty years old, never recorded, huh? What of it? It's written in old Don Tomás' own hand an' he acknowledges it. 'Bout the only words the old man has said. Aberson vouches for Galloway's identity. Galloway has plenty of proof. He's just too plainly the Galloway. That's all!"

Tealing muttered. He forgot Calvin momentarily, all the rest.

"Ten days!" he growled. "This Galloway set ten days for old Don Tomás to get off the very ranch the old man gives to him? Chet, no man would do a thing like that."

"One has," said Chet dryly.

"What—what has old Don Tomás done? I mean now."

"Done? What can he do? He hasn't left the ranch in the last five years, I guess. He's all old, old man. I was out to see him yesterday. He just sits in that big chair of his on the veranda an' looks off into the distance across Los Parros. He wont talk, not even to me. If it wasn't for his eyes you'd think he was dead—an old, withered

mummy, sittin' upright there in his chair on the veranda. Oh, hell! His eyes, though, look like—well, they look like no eyes I ever seen in a man before. Tealing, if you had made a gift like that once an' found it come back at you like a rattler strikin'—well, what would it be like? I just wonder! Ten days—kicked out! An' the pride of an Alcorta bred in your bones for about twenty-nine generations."

"You aint mentioned Sally."

"No," considered Chet. "I aint. I aint seen her lately. . . . . Well, you know how it is, I just aint seen her. That's all."

Tealing looked at Chet for a long moment under narrowed lids. "No? Where is she?"

"Oh, I dunno. I aint seen her; that's all."

"Yeah? It's funny she wouldn't be around with Don Tomás at a time like this. She aint at the ranch?"

"Well," said Chet, "I didn't see her anywhere around when I was out there yesterday. You know, she might easy enough have been there an' me not seen her—"

"Come clean!" bellowed Tealing. "I've had enough of this beatin' around the bush. Where is the girl? What's she done? Is this whole country gone mad?"

But Chet Dailey had turned, looking out through the opened door into the shaded street of the little town. The Sheriff also heard the pound of hoofs outside. The hoofs came to a thudding halt; a billow of dust lifted across the doorway. Chet turned back, came toward the sheriff and leisurely sat down in one of the office chairs.

"I reckon," he said carefully, "that you're about to hear, Sheriff. An' I'm right glad I aint in your official boots."

ABERSON, gnarled, thin, stooped, stood in the doorway. He was one of the richest cow-men in the county. It had all come from what had originally been Los Parros land. The deal that had brought him the land, power and money had shady marks on the under-surface—this, Tealing hadn't forgotten. Aberson wore a frayed gray suit, vest and black string necktie; possibly because these things were symbols in his mind of a certain dignity becoming to his status in the community.

Behind Aberson, in the doorway of the office, stood E. J. Galloway, and two men waited outside. Galloway's pale face looked like putty. It looked so dead and lifeless that a finger touching the cheek might leave a permanent impression in the flesh. He merely nodded. But Aberson stepped forward.

"Glad to see you back, Tealing," he announced pompously. He stepped on across the room and shook hands with Tealing. The Sheriff dropped the cold hand swiftly. "After all, the man you were after was a small matter," continued Aberson. "He didn't meet with success in his attempt to rob me that night. Of little importance—"

"Little?" asked Tealing. "He killed my friend Calvin, your foreman!"

"Yes, yes," corrected the stooped man suddenly; "I didn't refer to that part of it. No! But this other thing now. You're needed here, Sheriff. Last night it was some twenty head of Los Parros saddle-stock. Gone! Fence cut! One of Galloway's men got hurt, takin' after 'em. The trail goes into the Chuchupates, like the others."

"What are you talkin' about?" asked Tealing heavily.

"Sally Alcorta!" said Aberson. "I mean her, o' course."

"What's Sally got to do with some twenty head of missin' stock?"

Tealing's big, rawboned body was rigid as the office chair he sat in. Chet Dailey looked at no one in the room; his eyes seemed forcibly centered on the far wall. Aberson straightened abruptly.

"Why, the girl took 'em!" he barked. "Three of the old Los Parros *vaqueros* deserted to her. They're raisin' just plain hell! Tryin' to break Galloway before he gets started. Or run him off—"

"Pshaw!" said Tealing. He tried to laugh, and the laugh broke in his throat. "Pshaw! Quit kiddin'! I know that girl pretty well, an' I know those *vaqueros,* I reckon—Juan, Pedro, Felipé. Old-timers! Each has rode on a posse with me at one time or another. Trusted men; mind their own business; do what they're told—"

BEHIND Aberson, Galloway smiled. The hard, little blue ice-points appeared in his colorless eyes; the putty-dead face became alive. He hadn't spoken until now.

"Yeah! Trusted men! Do what they're told. *Pronto,* unless this stops, they'll be dead men!"

Galloway's lips closed, but the face did not change. His right hand quivered; it was not nervousness. Chet Dailey's eyes had left the wall and watched Galloway. Chet's own expression was not pleasant.

"Y'see Galloway's mad," Aberson ex-

plained. "He's got enough reason to be! He come here expectin' to find what was his, lay claim to it and continue with his business like any peaceful, law-abidin' citizen. I've got an interest in it, too—always wanted that land, and Galloway's agreeable to sell right as soon as things get straight. Now this! Like a stroke of lightnin' all this. . . . . We've waited for you, Tealing."

TEALING groaned. "What d'you want me to do?"

"Do?" echoed Aberson. "What would you be expected to do? What's customary in a rustlin' case? Are you Sheriff, or what?"

Tealing couldn't think quite straight. "Pshaw!" he began again, and tried to laugh. "Pshaw! I don't believe it."

"No?" asked Aberson. "Listen: The girl made an open threat to Galloway the day she learned who he was. Chet Dailey, here, heard it. She explained her intentions and didn't mince words. She told Galloway that she'd run every head of stock on Los Parros so far into the Lagarto that he'd never get one out alive. She'd ruin him before he started. Every head, she said."

"Yeah," agreed Chet Dailey suddenly, loudly. "Her exact words was: 'Every head, you faker!' "

"Galloway has all the proof in the world," snapped Aberson swiftly. "Do you mean to insinuate that—"

But like a drowning man Tealing grasped at a straw. "I want to see that deed," he bellowed. "Stock is movable. Unless specified, it wont go with the land. I'm no lawyer, but—"

Aberson nodded and reached for the right-hand breast pocket of his coat. His thin, restless fingers drew out a folded sheet of parchment.

"The deed has been recorded," he said. "Mr. Galloway attended to that immediately, but he kept the original at hand for just such a case as this."

"You mean you kept it," decided Chet Dailey. Aberson, handing the paper to Tealing, stopped short. "For Mr. Galloway, o' course," amended Chet easily.

Tealing had the paper in hand, devouring the old-fashioned, strange scroll of the words. An old-timer in the Southwest, he read and spoke Spanish fluently. . . . .

"Uh-huh, uh-huh," he muttered at last. "You're right. Whatever stock is on the land." He continued, muttering slowly: "In the old days stock was worth more'n the land under it. Don Tomás was never a man to give by halves. You—you buzzards!" he ended in a whisper that didn't pass his lips.

Aberson smiled thinly. "It's up to you, Tealing. Galloway's waited—and lost by it. It's up to you to get the girl, bring her in. She can't expect any mercy after this. Galloway and I will swear to whatever sort of warrant you want—"

"Warrant!" echoed Tealing. Then something boiled up in him. "Damned if I will!" he bellowed. "Damned if I take a step! Good luck to her!"

Aberson drew back a pace from Tealing's fury. But Galloway merely smiled, and turned to the two riders who stood outside the doorway, hard-faced, hard-eyed men, strangers to even Chet Dailey.

"Hear that?" he said to them. "Remember it. Sheriff refuses to do his sworn duty. In a case like that it's left up to us, huh?"

Silence.

"Wait—wait a minute," mumbled Tealing. "I didn't mean quite that. Sally's no criminal, whatever she's done. She's just got things twisted somehow. Listen! She's just got things figured out wrong—"

"Yeah?" asked Galloway, turning away.

"Wait," continued Tealing. "Wait a minute. I'll find her, talk to her. If you'll dismiss any charge against the girl, I'll—"

"Now, will you, Sheriff?" asked Galloway. Pausing, he was the transfigured man again. "Now, will you? I'll go you one better. I'll get her red-handed!"

He was gone, his boot-heels thudding down the office steps, the two men who had remained just outside the door beside him. Aberson pulled his dignity tight upon his thin, stooped form and tight-lipped face. He started to say something.

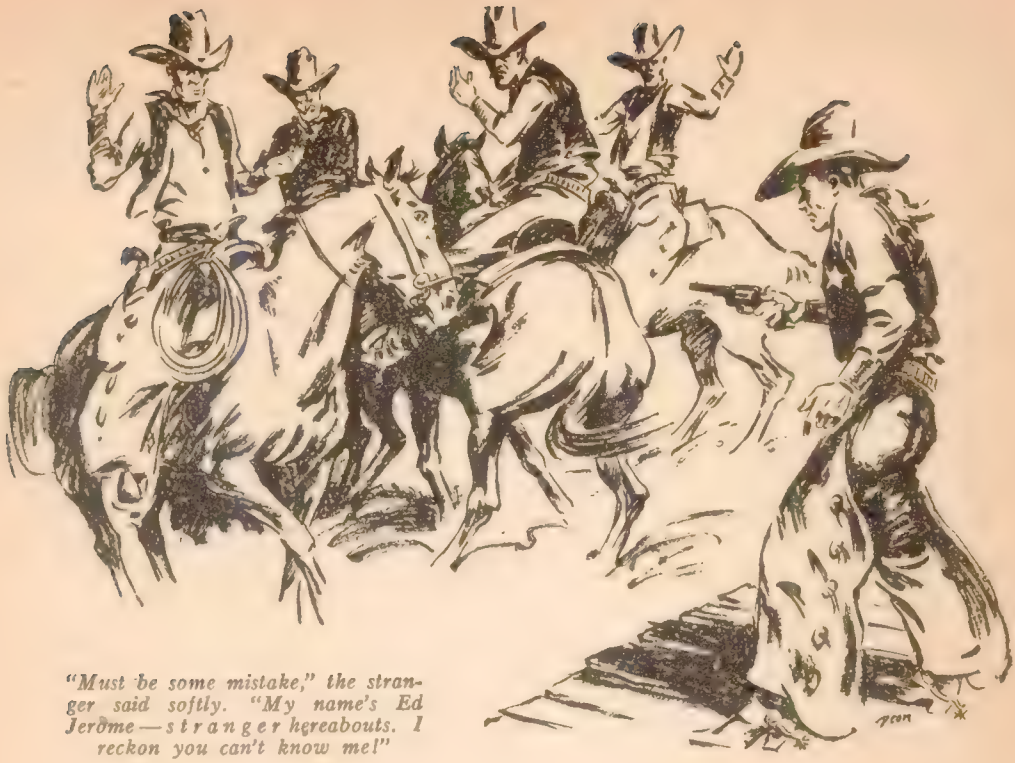
"Oh, get on out, too!" said Chet Dailey wearily. "I aint no sheriff an' I aint quite responsible for my acks, offen. Get out, 'fore I hit you."

Aberson fled.

"I CAN'T say, Sheriff," continued Chet Dailey, getting to his feet and looking out the door after Aberson, "that you carried this off quite so well as you might. If Galloway gets that hard-eyed crew of his in action, y'know—might look pretty tough. But action on your part, Tealing, is just about your cue right now, I reckon—"

Chet Dailey's words halted. He grunted. And he stared out the opened door. . . . .

Coming up the old boardwalk at this



"Must be some mistake," the stranger said softly. "My name's Ed Jerome—stranger hereabouts. I reckon you can't know me!"

point of the street, was a young man. The young man had a peculiarly lithe look about him. There was a certain tigerish grace right now under his sauntering, lazy stroll. Chet, with an eye for detail, saw it all. The man was tense, expectant, waiting for something, facing it. . . . . What?

Galloway and his two men sat their horses at the curb while Aberson mounted. But Galloway was like steel in the saddle, his eyes on the man coming toward them. His eyes had that beady immobility of a snake's—tiny ice-points of brilliance under lowered lids. Chet had noticed how colorless they had seemed before. Again that quiver in a slightly lifted right hand.

Chet grunted.

Aberson mounted and swung his horse half around in the street. One of the hard-faced men turned with him. Galloway hadn't moved—a statue of spring steel drawn to the breaking point, facing the stranger. Then Aberson also halted. Aberson's eyes also hung on the young man. They remained riveted. But Aberson's jaw fell; his thin lips parted.

Behind Chet Dailey, in his office chair, Tealing said, continuing: "At that, I must have had what was almost a hunch up in the Seeley yesterday, bringin' him down here. You two can get into the Chuchupates now—"

Chet didn't hear. He was certain that Galloway was going to make the movement that would break loose gunfire. Certain as fate! Galloway moved. The flash of his quivering right hand was like the spring of a rattler's head from the coils. Then something stuck for a split second. Maybe the edge of a batwing chap overhung the holster at his hip by an inch or two and his fingers had to snap that aside to get at the gun-butt below. Maybe—

The stranger on the boardwalk smiled. A shiny new weapon in his hand weavingly covered the four.

"Must be some mistake," he said softly. Chet heard only those words, despite Tealing's mumble behind. "My name's Ed Jerome, stranger hereabouts. I reckon you can't *know me* after all! S'long and get!"

Chet Dailey sighed reluctantly, returned to his chair and sat down. Tealing was still talking, staring down at a blunt forefinger that traced meaningless designs on the cloth of one trouser knee.

"This Galloway—dangerous as a snake! I got to stick here; look after this end. It's up to you, Chet, to corral Sally—hold her in the mountains until I see how things are comin' out here. That's your job, yours and Jerome's. . . . . I forgot to tell you about Jerome, I guess. He's a homesteader up in the Seeley. About to starve out this

year, an' I reckon it was little short of a hunch that prompted me to bring him down here, on a deputy's pay."

"Deputy's pay?" Chet replied thoughtfully. "Homesteader — Seeley — huh! Where'bouts in the Seeley? I get up that way every spring, buying' feeders."

"You'll like as not know him," said Tealing. "There's a little dry-land clearin' in that south finger of the basin. Farthest south; five miles west from the head of Seeley Creek, about; an' bankin' right up against the hills."

"Sure," agreed Chet, "I know the place, know it well. Stopped there more'n once over night. Let's see—now what was that feller's name? What was it?"

"Jerome, I told you," snapped Tealing. "Ed Jerome. Good man. I rode with him up there. The quiet sort, an' he knows what saddle-leather is used for."

There was a very thoughtful expression on Chet Dailey's face as he looked into the steady gray eyes of Ed Jerome at the doorway, as Tealing introduced them. Chet knew the little dry-land clearing and homestead very well. He knew the owner, a heavy-witted, big-hearted farmer of Swedish descent, and Chet rarely forgot a man's name.

The Seeley homesteader happened to be named Ole Jorgensen.

CHAPTER V

THE maneuver was conducted with a good bit of skill. Deputy Ed Jerome was mounted on one of Tealing's own horses, a catlike black. He dropped off the ridge to the right and the black bounced down through the windfalls, brush and slides like a taut rubber ball. There wasn't any other way of cutting off the cañon head below; and, at the same time, Chet Dailey watched Jerome disappear with vague misgivings. Chet didn't ask questions of himself—but that was the reason he sat a motionless horse for a full moment, looking after the retreating figure until it disappeared.

Chet meanwhile wrapped a small, high-power pair of binoculars in a piece of dirty shirt and thrust them into a saddle pocket. Then he spurred his mount east along the crest of the ridge at a lope. Farther east, ten miles or so, the Chuchupates fell down into the plain. Beyond that, with the noontime haze over it, was the reddish horizon line of the Lagarto. Since early morning Chet had been weaving the lens of the binoculars over the whole sweep of the country, with particular attention to the nearer open windings of every cañon in view. For two days now he and Ed Jerome had been in the high country that Chet knew so well. This was the first action.

"Plenty long a-comin'," Chet told himself. "But right now it's breakin' proper. Fair an' proper."

In the deep cañon to the right Chet's naked eye in fact could plainly distinguish the four riders. Four small dots in the water-worn bottoms, riding swiftly northwest with the windings, at every step getting deeper into the fastness behind.

The maneuver worked like this: Deputy Jerome cut off the head of the cañon, turning the riders back. No gun-play. Not too close, not too far behind, Jerome followed at their heels. Chet, who by that time had put himself in some strip of narrows at the rear, simply blocked the way out and met them face to face. They had them. Simple! Then the powwow. And in the powwow Chet figured that he was just about going to talk some sense into Sally Alcorta's pretty head. As the plan ran, he was going to put her under arrest, then communicate with Tealing, at Crocker, before making a next move, to see how things stacked up in town by now.

A quarter of a mile or so east along the ridge, Chet cut down. There was no particular hurry. Jerome's move came first, before Chet could play his own hand.

In the two days Chet had come no closer to an understanding of Jerome than when he had first looked up into the gray eyes, in the doorway of the Sheriff's office. Chet liked Ed Jerome, no question of that, and Chet thought that forty-eight hours alone with a man was long enough to pass judgment. He liked Jerome—at the same time there was the Seeley homesteader, named Jorgensen, and there was the incident that Chet had witnessed in the street before Tealing's office. Chet's idea of finding what was wrong was to keep his own mouth shut, but his ears open and his eyes wide.

Half down the slopes, he angled out onto a side ridge at an easy, long-legged trot. Another sweeping view of the cañon lay below him. Up the course, the four had disappeared. Chet nodded to himself. Then his eyes traced down-cañon, looking for a suitable block of narrows for his own play. Chet got just that far, just to the point of locating the walled stretch he wanted—

IN the mouth of the opening gorge below appeared a tight fan of riders. Chet saw them plainly. He was close enough above to have told the approximate color of every man's mount. Six of them! They were moving at a lope, pushing up the cañon at a hard pace against the rough going of a bouldered stream course.

For an instant Chet hesitated.

What might have happened at Los Parros in the past two days Chet didn't know. But he didn't need anyone to tell him that the riders behind were Galloway's men, that they were on a self-assumed duty, purposeful and each well-armed. He didn't need anyone to tell him that the first mount was Galloway's, and that the man's colorless eyes were now two brilliant, icy dots on the trail ahead. And ahead—ahead was Deputy Ed Jerome about to turn the quarry back down-cañon and run them nose to nose into Galloway's hands—or guns.

Chet went down the cañon slope, quartering upstream, with the wind whistling in his ears. In less than five minutes, in an open, bouldered flat below, he pulled halt. He waited, headed downstream, gun drawn. And he hadn't long to wait.

Galloway rode, to confront him face to face at a distance of a few feet before he drew his mount.

"What now?" was all he said.

"Well, now," remarked Chet Dailey, "you-all is stoppin'. This is as far as you go this trip. Do I make myself plain?"

Galloway laughed in a brittle, cracking note. His riders, strangers all to Chet, edged their horses in, as though to hear what was being said. It happened swiftly. Chet was not thick-witted. He attempted to back his horse up, and the rump of the animal struck the chest of a pushing mount behind.

Galloway laughed again.

Chet knew what was about to happen. His bluff was called. No gun was in sight against him; no word was spoken. The men might all have been his friends, pushing in close to hear the very least whisper that came from his lips. No one had said they wouldn't halt; no one even voiced opinion, in fact. And Chet knew that something was going to happen in seconds, or less. If he wanted to prevent it he had to shoot somebody, and shoot quick. Because he was not thick-witted he didn't shoot—not in that fashion at least.

His gun did not lift—but four times it exploded into the earth as swiftly as trigger could be pulled, before one of the edging riders caught his arm, and the gun-butt of another descended on his skull from behind.

Chet Dailey went out of the saddle like a bag of meal.

CHET opened painful eyes. His mount was gone. His gun, thrown down beside him, was empty, as was the cartridge belt at his waist. But Chet reasoned that very little time had passed.

He got to his feet and dizzily began to climb the same slope he had ridden down moments before. In the course of a quarter of an hour or a bit more he had reached the crest of the side ridge above from where he had first glimpsed the Galloway riders below. Looking up-cañon, Chet waited and watched, and nursed the egg-shaped bump on the back of his head.

"Sure ought to have heard them shots," he muttered. "He'd know I wouldn't be shootin' unless— Sure he would!"

Then a wide grin spread suddenly over Chet Dailey's features. Almost to the crest of the opposite cañon wall, his eyes made out the dots of riders weaving through the brush, climbing over the far ridge. They crossed a white, scarlike opening. Chet could have sworn that the lead mount was a black. He slapped his thigh delightedly.

"That Ed Jerome sure knows what brains is for! Leadin' 'em out hisself. What d'you know!"

Chet had no regrets. To have brought about gunplay in the cañon could have had only serious result. In fact, the situation had been delicate indeed. No one knew better than Chet just how weak Tealing's stand was in Crocker. Violence, on the part of one of Tealing's newly sworn deputies, in actually aiding the girl to escape, would have been one thing; to have allowed her to run in face to face with Galloway and his hard-eyed crew was another —and, well, the way things had turned out satisfied Chet. His only concern was the many miles now lying between himself and Crocker, or the nearest ranch where he could get a horse. But with a mount under him again, all he had to do was to push back into the Chuchupates and find Ed Jerome and the girl. Jerome would be watching for him.

Chet slowly made his way down the slope again and started walking out the windings of the cañon to the plain. He was soon footsore; not long afterward he began to limp and frequently he rested. None the less

his spirit was light. He resolved to make Crocker before the next dawn, if possible, and immediately inform Tealing that Jerome had Sally Alcorta and would be holding her somewhere in the Chuchupates. The liking that he had found for Jerome increased to the point of enthusiasm as he reviewed the ready working of Jerome's wits in the moment of crisis.

AT late afternoon, a lonely, tiny speck on the landscape, he trudged out onto the plain. Ten minutes later, his habitually roving eyes made out three dots to the north, along the hill edge of the Chuchupates—riders and not stray stock, he could tell by the dust. Somewhat larger in form, they appeared in the same specklike relation to him that he appeared to them. Five minutes after that, changing his own course slightly, Chet knew that the riders had caught sight of him. So sighing with relief, Chet sat down, pulled the boots from his swollen feet and waited.

At several hundred yards Chet recognized Tealing, by the way the big man sat the saddle. As the distance halved, he was startled to realize that the gnarled, stooped Aberson rode on the Sheriff's right. At fifty yards, he rubbed his eyes, waited and opened them again. The third rider was the Seeley homesteader, Ole Jorgensen.

Chet was silent as Tealing drew rein beside him. He shook hands with Jorgensen in silence. It was Tealing, rumbling fury in his throaty, calculated words, who first spoke.

"Chet, there's no other way of lookin' at it!" the Sheriff growled. "From the first, Chet, you knew somethin' was phony about this Jerome."

"Well," stuttered Chet, "well, I couldn't be certain. He didn't use Jorgensen's name, anything like that. Sure, I kinda wondered to myself, but—"

"But!" snapped Tealing. "What you've done is to let Calvin's killer get out right from under my fingers. By God, he got out right from under my own fingers—wearin' one of my own deputy badges!"

"How—how do you figure that? Calvin's killer!"

"How? I'll tell you: From the Lagarto the man rode for Jorgensen's clearing. Jorgensen had been gone several days then—after provisions, over in Whitefall. The killer saw his two ponies over in the hills; he sized things up, found a stray saddle an' made himself at home, turnin' my sorrel free with the ponies. . . . . Oh, yeah, I see it plain enough now. But at the time, I somehow didn't find a doubt of him. He rode with me up there, lookin' for himself!" The Sheriff's eyes blazed. . . . . "When Jorgensen got home he natur'lly wondered who'd stole his two ponies. Somebody had seen us headin' back for Crocker with the outfit. So Jorgensen come on, to find out the why-for of a sheriff rustlin' his saddle stock without a word."

Ole Jorgensen nodded and grinned. "Sure 'nough," he agreed. "I sure did."

"Now what's become of this Jerome at this date?" bellowed Tealing at Chet.

"Why—why, I'll explain," Chet began. "I'll explain to you in private, Sheriff."

"You'll explain to me quick an' in public," snapped Tealing. *"Pronto!"*

So Chet did.

THERE was no change on the tight-lipped Aberson's face at Chet's words. But when he had finished Aberson was the man to speak.

"Tealing, we been workin' at cross purposes," he said. "I reckon you can see it now, as well as me. Those three Los Parros *vaqueros* know this country like no other men. No use in not admittin' the truth, huh? Your man's with 'em. He's wearin' your deputy star. I thought I recognized him that day before your office; but the star made me think I was wrong. Tealing, what's going to happen now?"

Tealing didn't know. He felt stunned. Too much had happened already.

Aberson coughed deep in his throat. "Galloway already has five men workin' for him. There are eight on my place. Add to that a few townspeople. Get the bunch behind you, an' you've got a posse that a jackrabbit couldn't run through very many times." Aberson coughed again. "Something like that has got to be done, Tealing."

Sheriff Tealing nodded slowly.

"It has!" he agreed.

BUT Chet Dailey had a mind of his own. He also had nerve, a lot of it. In its way, as Tealing said, he was responsible for what had happened. And for some reason that he could not explain to himself, in the face of the evidence, Chet still believed that Ed Jerome now waited in the high country, with Sally Alcorta. For one thing, Jerome would have no way of knowing that the Seeley homesteader, Ole Jorgensen, had appeared at Crocker after his two ponies.

Four times Chet's gun exploded into the earth before one of the riders caught his arm.

Then Chet somehow believed, without a shred of fact to support it, that Ed Jerome had been playing the high-country game on the square; perhaps only waiting to see how things broke for himself, yet playing the game on the straight.

As Chet rode alone into the divides, at sunup the next morning, he was resolved upon one thing. Ed Jerome, the companion he had admired the day before, was to be delivered to Tealing at any cost. Chet Dailey was the man to carry this through, to do it. . . . . But to reassure himself, somehow, he repeated over and over:

"He killed Calvin! Shot him there in the wash, just to get a fresh mount for himself. Two shots in the back! Calvin never knew what happened, never had a chance—it was murder!"

This went on for hours, as Chet ranged into the high country he knew so well. Then suddenly came the question:

"If he shot Calvin for a mount, why didn't he take that mount, *pronto?* He wouldn't know that Tealing would leave that sorrel loose above. Couldn't have known it!" It was like an inner voice talking to Chet. . . . . "Listen! Listen, Chet! Calvin hadn't discovered him. That couldn't 'a' been the reason. Calvin wasn't the man to turn tail from anything."

The idea grew on that foundation.

From then on Chet scoured the miles of the high country, the relentless purpose that had driven him to the saddle at Crocker changing to greater indecision with each mile. But even before he had been able to get away, Tealing, Aberson and Galloway, with nearly twenty men at their heels, had begun the drive that was to make local history. There was only that little voice talking to Chet:

"Chet, Jerome didn't shoot Calvin!"

CHAPTER VI

ABERSON was right—the three old-time Los Parros *vaqueros* knew by heart the pages of the Chuchupate country, down to the Rio Bravo, Conejo, the flat lands and the opening stretches of the Lagarto. They were men of few words, much native resource and strategy and they asked no question. Further, the Los Parros mounts, stolen to most thoroughly hamper Galloway, were unvaryingly fine horses, and they had bands numbering some half hundred head scattered through the secluded meadows of the high lands. At the start, they knew where many remounts, each as good as the tiring animals under saddle, could be found. A pack-horse load of food had been cached.

The first day was play for the five riders. They weren't ridden from cover until afternoon, and they were lost at dusk. But if Jerome had been something of a mystery to Chet Dailey he was more so to Sally Alcorta. Her expressive brown eyes flashed, as she asked:

"Why? . . . . When you first appeared in the cañon I saw where that star was pinned down in your shirt pocket. You confess that you're Tealing's deputy, that you came for us—and you ride with us. You have a gun. Why don't you give us up?"

"And why," asked Ed Jerome, grinning amiably, "would a perfectly proper, charming and attractive young lady—like you, for instance—choose to become a lady horse-rustler, a *bandida?* If I understood that maybe I would. But why would such a young lady threaten to pillage Los Parros, drive stock into the desert to die, and things like that?"

"Because she means to," said Sally Alcorta. "This Galloway will never have Los Parros; he wont sell to Aberson, if it can be helped. Except—except, well, I have seen stock dying of thirst, and it is horrible. The little calves, too. Maybe first—"

"And the reason behind this?" asked Ed Jerome. "Your grandfather once gave ten thousand acres of the heart of Los Parros to a man who couldn't possibly deserve it—is that the reason?"

"Señor," she cried, reverting to Spanish for a word, "it is not! The father of this man, the true man, once saved my own father's life. Is that not enough to begrudge nothing to a Galloway? Of course," she considered, "I should not care personally for the young man. You understand. He would be too much like a plump, well-fed cat that wished only to bask in the sun and lap the richness of Los Parros. But he is welcome. If it were not for him, would I ride?"

"Not for him?" asked Jerome, puzzled. "You're ridin' for him?"

"Of course. Los Parros is his. It must be held in any possible way for him until he comes."

"But—but there he is on Los Parros," said Ed Jerome. "And here you are in the Chuchupates, making things as uncomfortable as possible. He wishes to sell. Aberson can't quite buy with things in this shape."

"That! That man!" she said, and her delicate lips curled with scorn. "He is no Galloway, a *perro!*"

"So? Doesn't he call himself Galloway? Hasn't he papers? How can you know? Hasn't he everything that Galloway would have come with?" Under his breath Ed Jerome added, "—and a whole lot more."

"My grandfather knew instantly," she told him. "He talked to us the first night. He asked the *vaqueros'* decision—and mine, for the House of Alcorta. This is it. It is all that could be done."

"But your grandfather acknowledges that the deed is real, the same he once drew."

"Yes—the truth," said the girl. "But the son of a *caballero* will be *como caballero,* not like a dog. My old grandfather's eyes are keen, so is his wit."

"Oh!" said Ed Jerome thoughtfully. "Oh! Say, you don't mean that he expects Galloway—the real Galloway, I mean—to turn up here sometime now?"

"Any hour, any minute," vouched the girl. "My grandfather sits on the veranda all day long watching for him. You see, it was difficult and it took much time and money for my grandfather to find the Galloway I speak of."

"Difficult—uh-huh. In fact, I don't see how he did it."

"Through a man named Charles Harley," she explained. "Mr. Harley seemed to know how to go about such things. But it was very difficult. The real Galloway had even changed his name."

"What name now?"

"His second name, the name of Jerome. But you see my grandfather knew that this man, the son of the other, wouldn't come unasked, even though he now owned the land under our roof. It was my grandfather's duty to give invitation first. Which he did."

"Oh! Uh-huh," considered Ed Jerome. Then a strange intensity came into his voice. "Listen: Maybe this Jerome wouldn't dare come now. Galloway has the deed; he's established himself. All necessary proof. How would the other make things known? Under a cloud! What chance would he have? What could he do now?"

"He would come," said the girl. "All the more reason now. He would come to our aid."

"Oh!" said Ed Jerome. "I hadn't thought of it in that light. But I see your point. It's true."

"BY the way," said the girl; "you have given us no name for yourself. We don't know what to call you."

"Oh, they call me Ed," said Ed Jerome.

"Just Ed? Only a first name?"

"Sometimes Eddie, or even Edward."

They were silent for a time. The girl's face was turned away from Ed Jerome,

tilted, and he was seemingly content just to watch her so, in silence. But finally he muttered:

"If this Jerome did come now it might not be such easy sleddin' for him, y'know. He wouldn't have anything solid to get a foothold on; it would be like tryin' to win a race standing in quicksand. Or trying to steer through fog. But if—well, if he came now, do you still think Jerome would remind you of some fat, worthless cat?"

"Well, I hadn't thought of that," considered the girl. "Perhaps not. But still I do not think I would like him personally, Mr. Edward."

THAT was one day. The next opened with gunfire.

Tealing had divided his posse into factions. With a fixed intensity that was almost madness only one thought now played through Tealing's brain: Get the man who had outwitted him, Calvin's killer, no matter what it cost! He forgot the Alcortas, Galloway, Aberson, except in so far as each might help or hinder his purpose. Nothing could stand between him and that.

And at dawn Galloway, with four of his picked men at his heels, sighted a tiny spiral of gray smoke rising from a cañon head beyond. He rode for it, splitting his men to block the pass above. He gave his own order. It was brief, terse and allowed for no misunderstanding:

"Shoot, an' shoot to kill! The man of you that can get this Jerome earns five hundred dollars of my money, as well as Tealing's thanks. Savvy?"

That order was never changed.

Juan Venegas, oldest and most saddlewise of the three Los Parros *vaqueros,* chanced to note one of Galloway's men, as the rider sharply pushed his mount across an open slide. They had several moments' warning; and before gunfire broke, rode straight down the cañon, instead of up as Galloway had planned. All rode through, but a mile beyond Sally Alcorta's horse finally went down, wounded from a glancing shot. One of the *vaqueros* stripped her saddle loose, and Jerome mounted her before him, on his own animal.

An hour later they cut into a hidden *cienaga,* changed to fresh horses and were gone.

It wasn't serious, but Jerome had a first premonition of the change that had come over things. For a brief moment, far south, he had had view of another part of the posse. He reasoned to himself that Galloway had merely split his force. These men were strangers to the country, hard riders, but except for ill luck were not to be too greatly feared. Yet he wondered.

JEROME waited for Chet Dailey to appear.

"Sure some mess, howsomever you look at it," Chet had said. "I can't quite figure why she's done this; but if that Galloway skunk wont drop charges, then it's up to you an' me, Jerome. Sally aint goin' to face no jail sentence, no matter what the reason. If it comes to that, we see that the girl gets out of the country—Los Angeles, San Francisco, somewhere on the Coast like that. Then we'll ship old Don Tomás up to her, savvy? I got a bit of cash laid away against emergencies."

That was Chet. And Ed Jerome, one way or another, intended to stick in the high country until he appeared. See how things broke.

In the hours of that last morning they had been together Jerome had been tempted to tell the whole story of himself to Chet, to repeat what had happened at Aberson's that first night. The details didn't matter. But Jerome had found himself stripped of the deed and an unimportant letter or two. Then close-quartered fight. In this he twisted Aberson's gun away, lost it as soon, but thought he had killed the man. He fled for his life, knowing suddenly that to escape with it would be the only false cog in the machinery of the plot. By dawn the whole had become transparent to Jerome. He saw as plainly what he had to fight back with—saw only too well.

Then Calvin's death!

But all in all, Jerome enjoyed the hours that now passed. Sally Alcorta—he could see her riding beside him, the tilt of her features against the open sky, the mass of her dark hair wound under a silk bandana. He could see the delicate slender grace of her body in the saddle, and in that slenderness he knew there was stamina to shame many a man. He saw the line of her throat tinted pale gold with the last light of sunset and many times he looked into the misty, dark depths of her eyes. For an hour one day Jerome had listened to Chet telling of the old House of Alcorta. He believed what he heard. And long ago Ed Jerome remembered another man who had also told of the Alcortas. When he could not see her after darkness Sally Alcorta,

daughter of the old house, child, too, of a dancer whose beauty had once charmed the Coast, was a vision before his eyes still.

"Where do we go from here?" Ed Jerome said more than once. It was spoken in jest; but below, the words rested on rock. Where?

Still Chet Dailey did not come. . . . .

There was reason for this. They had criss-crossed through the Chuchupates, down past Conejo Flats. Back again. Jerome grew suddenly moody, worried. This couldn't go on. Odds had grown too steep against them; too many men were riding the upper country. It was becoming too dangerous—for Sally Alcorta. Inevitably they would hit ambush. It might be deadly—who knew?

Galloway must have fifteen or twenty men in the saddle. What had happened to Tealing, who had remained at Crocker to forestall just such a complication, while Chet and Jerome scoured the high country for the girl? Was Galloway out for blood? It had all the earmarks of just that. For himself, Jerome knew beyond doubt. But where was Tealing?

Suddenly, late in the afternoon of the third day, Ed Jerome learned.

The black that Jerome had ridden out from Crocker, at Chet Dailey's side, had turned up again in one of the meadows and Jerome had thrown saddle on it that morning. Toward middle afternoon the riders pushed deep into a stand of Jeffery timber, to rest until nightfall. Restless, alone, Jerome turned east through the timber, intent on riding to a near point in that direction to watch the country below.

IT was the inevitable, the thing that sooner or later was bound to happen in one form or another. It happened now that Tealing also sat this same point of land, watching the lower stretches with binoculars. He was shielded behind by a jutting ledge of rock. Because of this the two men, the Sheriff and his deputy Jerome, met face to face and the distance between them was not seventy feet. As he reasoned things, Jerome would have asked for nothing more. He grinned.

"Howdy, Sheriff!" he hailed cheerfully.

Tealing's eyes popped. His face was suddenly carved of granite; it turned to the gray color of granite. He went for a gun.

For just an instant, a fatal instant, Jerome hesitated.

Tealing's shot clipped his left side, under the arm, and broke a rib. . . . . Behind, Tealing was roaring, cursing. He shot as fast as a trigger could be pulled. The shielding ledge of rock that had brought them so treacherously face to face became Jerome's advantage. The black under him was nervous, fast. It had whirled the instant of the shot, in full run. Somehow Jerome had held the saddle under the shock of the bullet and the whirl of the black.

A gun was at Jerome's right hip. He hadn't attempted to shoot back. Tealing had run down the slope for his mount.

AT the temporary camp in the timber, the shot and the following fusillade from Tealing's weapon had been heard. They were in the saddle as Jerome came up. All rode—mile after mile, because Tealing's men had been grouped near by. Juan Venegas was in the lead. They were forced down before dusk, actually onto Los Parros land. A halt. Jerome's wound was bandaged, to stanch the continual, aggravated bleeding. In the saddle once more, on again. Only the creak of saddle-leather and the thud of hoofs. Just before dusk another group of men had appeared against the light of a west sky.

Those ahead paralleled the rim of foothills with nightfall. Jerome had lost a lot of blood. His body had a strange weakness in the saddle. Sally Alcorta rode beside him; occasionally he felt the touch of her hand.

Sometime in the middle-night, zigzagging back even nearer to Los Parros now, Juan drew halt in a deep arroyo that cut out of the hills. Still not satisfied with that, he searched on in the darkness until he found a small, steep side gully in which the glow of a fire would not show fifty yards away. He carried a small, rimmed frying-pan in one saddle pocket and in this he heated water. Another of the *vaqueros* cut twigs and tore long fresh bandages from shirts, to make a brace against the sway of Jerome's body in the saddle. Jerome spoke to Sally Alcorta:

"You'll have to go on alone. Go to Tealing."

"Señor—what do you mean?"

"Things have kind of changed around," said Jerome. "Sally, it's not you they want—it's me!"

Slow seconds of silence.

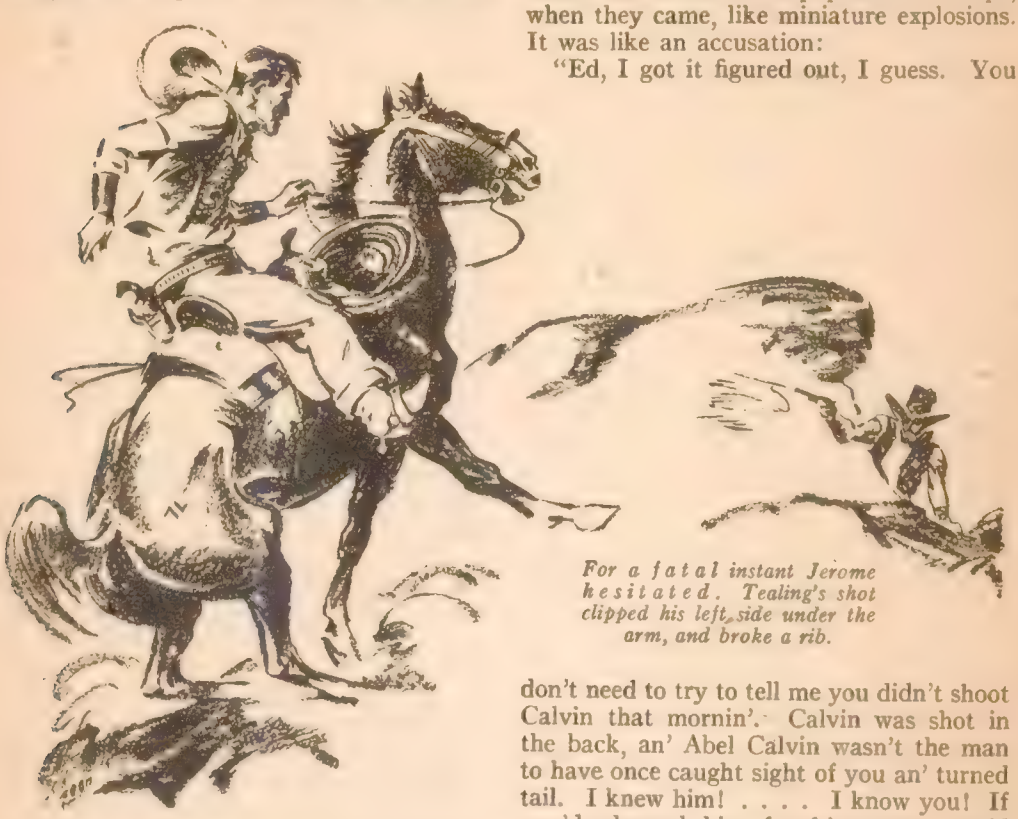
"You?" she asked.

"Uh-huh," said Ed Jerome. "But listen: You know that fellow we were talking

about—that Jerome. He might have done his damnedest. Never can tell. Don't think too hard of him, huh?"

"No, señor."

For the briefest instant Ed Jerome suddenly felt her lips brush his in the darkness.



For a fatal instant Jerome hesitated. Tealing's shot clipped his left side under the arm, and broke a rib.

He felt the firmer pressure of her small right hand. Then from the black of the arroyo wall, over Juan's fire, a low voice—

"Hello, Ed! That you?"

It was Chet Dailey.

"TEALING'S got his men spread out north," Chet told them. "He's spaced them along that first big wash. On a still night like this you'd hear a shod horse crossin' the rocks for a quarter of a mile, I reckon. Aberson an' some of Galloway's men south. That leaves Los Parros open—except for Galloway himself an' one man, who rode for the ranch-house, worried that you might turn up there. What's the plan?"

There was no answer.

"Ed," continued Chet suddenly, "you might have figured that Seeley homesteader would show up sometime, after the ponies you took."

"So that's it, huh?" said Ed Jerome. "I'd wondered."

"Yeah, that's it. I want to talk to you alone, Ed." Chet Dailey bent over Jerome for a full moment in the darkness, silent. The words seemed to pop from his lips, when they came, like miniature explosions. It was like an accusation:

"Ed, I got it figured out, I guess. You don't need to try to tell me you didn't shoot Calvin that mornin'. Calvin was shot in the back, an' Abel Calvin wasn't the man to have once caught sight of you an' turned tail. I knew him! . . . . I know you! If you'd plugged him for his mount you'd 'a' took it instanter. Only way. Also, you aint the hesitatin' kind when once you start somethin'. Them's reasons, Ed. An' I reckon, further, that I'm sayin' you aint the man to shoot any other in the back. But somehow it don't all turn out like it might. I've tried. F'r instance, you was fleein', we had you cold—by them two shots you got away an' there's no gainsayin' you didn't. Y'see, Ed?"

"If I was to tell you I wasn't even armed that morning, what would you say?" asked Jerome. "For all that, I thought I'd done for Aberson the night before."

"I reckon I'd believe you, Ed. But say, is that straight? Were you after Aberson's safe that night?"

Jerome ignored the last. "Listen, Chet: If I don't have to tell you I didn't kill Calvin, then I oughtn't to have to tell you who was with him, who did. Huh?"

Chet was silent. Then he cursed softly,

viciously, to himself in the darkness. "What reason, though? I'd thought of it, sure. It's the only thing in my mind. If you had that you could face Tealing, anybody. What reason, though?"

"None—that I can prove. But Galloway's at Los Parros now, huh? You're sure?"

"Yeah. One man with him, this feller they call Slide Harley. Aberson was worried, too. I bumped into him not over an hour ago, over east. Say, what's the idea?"

"If I can see Galloway maybe I can straighten things out a bit for somebody. That's all. Chet, you stick here with Sally. Maybe it'd be better to get back in the hills again for a while, as long as you're with her. Wait a bit, see?"

"Yeah, I know. Just what about you, Ed?"

"I'll be at Los Parros when dawn breaks, or a little before."

Chet Dailey considered. "Say, you got nerve. I aint mistakin' you. But you might tell me a good bit, I reckon, that I'd like to know."

"Let it go, Chet. Bring that black of Tealing's over, will you?"

"Uh-huh, but listen—"

"No use in makin' a disturbance, Chet. I could tell you a lot, an' every word of it hasn't got another to prove it's true. Let it go. *You got to trust me,* Chet! Bring the black over quiet."

It hadn't worked out as Chet Dailey had intended, this meeting. For long moments after Jerome had mounted and the black had blended with the night, Chet stood alone, undecided. Once one hand went toward the dangling reins of his own mount, the other savagely to his gun holster. He stood thus a moment, then relaxed. He shook his head. Slowly he turned toward the soft glow of Juan's fire. Juan was cooking now; Chet's nostrils caught the odor of frying jerky. Time they got in the saddle if they were going to.

SALLY ALCORTA suddenly stood confronting Chet. He could see the slender, blurred outline of her body in the night.

"Chet, he isn't gone?"

"Business of his own," muttered Chet. His voice sounded somehow shaky. "Somethin' about that feller makes me trust him. Can't help it; that's all. Yeah!"

"Where, Chet?"

"Why, Los Parros, I reckon. He decided he wanted to see Galloway. All I can say is good luck to him. I hope he finds Galloway. We'll be ridin', Miss Sally."

"Los Parros—Galloway?" she echoed. "He—*he* is Galloway!"

"What?"

"He is Galloway. Ed Jerome Galloway. Tonight I knew for sure!"

CHAPTER VII

IT lacked an hour or so of dawn. A little breeze fanned down from the foothills and it made the cottonwood leaves shiver and tremble among themselves. It sounded like an incessant whisper of tiny, unearthly voices over the Los Parros yards. Great, gnarled limbs made black forms against the stars and a dim starlight sky. Down in the meadows a bull lowed continually, a hoarse, low bellow that was scarcely audible in the yards—cowboy music.

Charles "Slide" Harley was no cowboy, despite the fact that a many-sided life had made a fair enough rider of him. He had played a hand in numerous gilt-surfaced mining companies and shady developments. But Harley's true game was most any one of the many varieties of confidence man, with a preference for the "yokel suckers," as he called them. He preferred to live and work in the cities. Lately, and perhaps the best thing he had ever pulled in his bag of tricks, to separate the goats from the sheep, was an obscure detective agency, specializing in shady studies that could so often be turned to a profit from two angles. Part of his business was legitimate, a blind for anything else. Life had made him something of a gunman, and his choice of weapon lay in the vicious, sawed-off shotgun and buckshot.

Slide Harley moved out from the shadow of a corral post now, a shotgun with a foot-and-a-half barrel under his arm. He stood undecided for a moment, then moved down the line of the rails. He halted, drew a cigarette from his pocket.

"We might as well call it a night, Galloway," he said, with emphasis on the last word and a twisted smile. "They aint comin' to call on us tonight."

There were horses in the Los Parros main corral, six or eight head. They stood in a quiet, compact group behind, drowsing. Galloway had put them there—bait for a trap. Galloway didn't answer for a moment. He also stood in black shadow.

"Reckon you're right, Slide. Next-best

bet would likely be to get out of the plain a way, come dawn."

"Wish this thing'd break," said Slide. "Sick of it! I crave bright lights again, not twenty-seven hours a day in a saddle. I crave some other kind of music than what that bull yonder is makin'—"

BUT of the two, the nervous Slide had the sharper ears. His right hand suddenly fastened on Galloway's arm in a tense grip. His left rubbed out the cigarette against the leg of his overalls.

"Listen!"

Galloway caught it then, too. Up the lane he could hear the muffled pat of a horse's hoofs. Iron struck a chance stone and rang in a tiny, hollow, not unmusical note. Both men were tense. A gun came slowly up in Galloway's hand. Slide Harley reached swiftly for the shotgun that he had leaned against a lower corral rail.

"Only one rider."

"Yeah. Be careful."

The lone rider was Aberson. Galloway, with some perverse sense of humor, let him ride within ten feet of them, silhouetted against the sky, and he let him dismount before he spoke:

"Well!"

Aberson seemed to wilt against the corral rails.

"Well, what brings you here?" asked Galloway.

Aberson didn't speak for ten seconds. "No need—to scare a man to death!" Then he bristled in his thin, stooped way. "What's the idea anyway? Who d'you think you are? What d'you—"

Galloway merely laughed. "What that's important is on your mind—eh, Aberson?"

Aberson suddenly whined. "Plenty. I've had a hunch all along. This Chet Dailey! Sometimes he's been ridin' with us, sometimes Tealing, but mostly alone. Tonight for sure I got more'n a hunch—"

Galloway whistled softly to himself. Then— "I reckon not!"

"Listen: He was with you that day Calvin was killed. Could he of seen anything? Could he've figured out the truth?" All the mock dignity was gone from Aberson, all of the pompous words, and he was what he was. He whined: "This Chet—I've knowed him. We can't take a chance on him. That's why I'm here. He's the kind that'll keep his mouth so shut a crowbar wouldn't open it until—until—"

"Aw, you need a drink," cut in Galloway. "An' I don't care if I do myself. Come on over to the house. In fact, you're gettin' a chronic case of faint heart, Aberson. I've noticed it lately."

"Yella," vouched Slide Harley behind.

They moved across the yards. Chaps and spurs had been left with saddles and only the light clump of boot-heels sounded on the old veranda of the house. Galloway pushed the door open. More than ever, when Galloway had struck a match and touched it to the wax tips of a candelabrum, Aberson looked the man he was—cowardly, furtive, unnerved to the point of trembling tonight.

Overhead in the room were great, smoke-darkened beams. The candlelight threw shadow between them. Candlelight glinted in reflection from a rack of ancient cutlery built into the wall beside a rear door. Slender old dueling rapiers hung there, swords that had come from Spain to the new country a century before, dirks, an old derringer pistol.

ABERSON shifted from one foot to the other.

"We got down close this way. I knew you were here," he began all over again. "I tell you this Dailey has been playin' some game of his own, all by himself—" Aberson broke off. "Listen to the way those trees rattle—"

Galloway laughed in his glassy tone. "Nobody saw me get Calvin that mornin'! Not even Calvin himself. This Dailey was with Tealing at the time, if that makes you easier."

"I—I didn't tell you to kill Calvin," whispered Aberson.

"No," agreed Galloway. "Calvin was another of these silent men of yours. He knew a whole lot, an' he put it up to me alone, there in the wash that mornin' just after Tealing had moved away. He wanted an explanation. After that there was just one thing to do. I did it."

"Sure," the confidence man put in his word. "You played your game, Galloway. You've done your part, just like I've done mine. Where would Aberson be if it wasn't for us? Where would you be, Aberson?" he asked. "From the minute old Alcorta showed up in my city quarters and wanted an Ed Jerome Galloway traced an' explained a bit, I knew that somewhere there was big possibilities in this business. There was. How big I didn't know until I'd come down here to look things over an' got acquainted

with you. Big thing. An' what part have you had in it, Aberson? Nothin'. Practically nothin'. For that we get a little split, but you get the lion's share, the ranch. You just furnish a name known hereabouts, atmosphere. I got all the papers for Galloway here to use; he's done the dirty work."

"He hasn't got the actual Galloway yet," muttered Aberson. "That Chet Dailey, I tell you—ridin' alone. That man knows somethin', Tonight—"

"Listen to me," cut in Slide Harley again. "Listen! If Ed Jerome was to get to the Crocker jail alive, if he was to get before a jury alive, he'd just hang the way things have broke. Nobody else but him could have had any reason to snuff Calvin out that mornin'. That's all. There would never be a bigger laugh pulled off in a courtroom than when he would try to tell about himself bein' Galloway. That's how well I've played my part an' did the job. He knows it himself. Knows it as well as we do. That's the reason he's ridin' now instead of tellin' his story before some law office. D'you need more proof?"

GALLOWAY smiled. "He wont be took alive. Five hundred dollars is a lot of money to any cow-poke. I remember my young an' maybe honester days. Add to it all the full blessin' of the local sheriff."

Aberson's hand, lifted at the moment, trembled with sudden remembrance. . . . . "By God, he's got nerve, though! To come back to the country, like this! That day when he stood before Tealing's office, smilin' at us, a deputy star on his shirt. I thought everything had collapsed under us right then. Didn't know which way to turn. He beat you to a draw that day, Galloway. I saw it with my own eyes. . . . . He says nothin'. Chet Dailey rides silent, on his own. It gets a man—gets him!"

Galloway took his drink at a swallow. The personal side of Aberson's words touched him. "Nobody beat me to a draw! That was the day I used my head. If any mistake was made—"

The "con" man took up the conversation: "The mistake come right at the start of things. I mean that night we somehow let him get away from Aberson's—alive!"

Aberson sat like a thin, shapeless bag of meal, dropped into a chair by the table. Galloway stood at one side; Slide Harley sat on one edge of the table. Each of the men heard slow steps through the rear of the house now. Galloway moved a bit aside, so that his shadow no longer covered the rear door to the room.

The door opened slowly. The light from the candelabrum shot beyond, framing in light the old form of Don Tomás Alcorta.

IN years he was almost eighty. But there was no stoop to his shoulders. Time had left her heavy mark on him, but it had not broken an indomitable spirit nor dimmed the pride of an Alcorta. His eyes had an eaglelike glitter to them in the candlelight. His deeply lined face was expressionless.

"Who is here?" he asked. "What brings you at this hour?"

Slide Harley relaxed; he winked at Galloway. "This here is a regular breach of etiquette. We must have mistook the hour we was asked for."

"My house is always open to friends," said Don Tomás. He faltered. "In the past—friends—"

Galloway laughed brittlely. "Yeah, don't forget. We're friends o' course. But that *my house* stuff don't go any longer! Now trot back to bed, grandpa."

The old man quivered. Straight as an arrow he stood in the doorway. There was no change of expression on his face. His eaglelike gaze stared at the three men.

Suddenly it was fixed beyond!

A figure stood in the door left open from the veranda. Like a shadow. The man was lean, tall. Silent. He wore a rider's tight hip overalls, the short brush jacket. A peculiar tigerish grace showed in his body; his right hand was a claw above the hip now. A strange, sick pallor on his face—but the gray eyes blazed.

Aberson, the fearful of the three, noted some change in Don Tomás. He stared. But Slide Harley and Galloway merely watched with a certain amusement.

Don Tomás bowed. He saw no one of the three men at the table. He looked beyond. There was a courtliness to the bow, a graciousness.

"Welcome, Señor Galloway. My friend, I have waited long for you."

Slide Harley grinned. A flicker of a smile was on Galloway's cold lips.

"Well, well," Galloway said; "that's the first time I've heard you put it just that way. You plannin' to bum the price of a goin'-away railroad ticket from me now, or just what? Come clean, grandpa."

The old man framed in the light did not hear.

As both struck—the end! A hollow groan came from deep in Galloway's throat. His blade drew free; it dropped to the floor.

"Señor Galloway, *amigo,*" he said, "you are the image of your father. So well I remember. He too was tall. He smiled as you smile. A *caballero, amigo,* if one ever lived. Brave as a tiger; sometimes he looked like a tiger also, afoot or mounted. The day he rode after my own small son. *Amigo,* how I wish you could see your father, as he rode that day."

A blank look came over Slide Harley's face. "Loco!" he muttered. "Th' old man's gone nuts! Batty!"

"Well, you couldn't ask for more," said Galloway.

At that instant Aberson turned. A scream came into his throat, echoed and was broken short between frozen lips.

SLIDE HARLEY had stood his weapon, the shotgun, against one wall of the room, not far from the veranda door. He whirled, while Galloway still looked at Don Tomás as the explanation of the unnerved Aberson's scream. Perhaps the continually tense life he had lived made Harley's wits the sharper against surprise. Aberson, seeing first, screaming, seemed petrified. Slide Harley turned an instant before Galloway drew his eyes from Don Tomás.

The very sharpness of Harley's wits outwitted him. He gauged the distance to his own vicious weapon, knew he couldn't make it—and his hand snapped across for Galloway's holster. By a split fraction of a second he beat Galloway to the weapon. It lifted in his hand—

The roar of Ed Jerome's gun crashed in the confines of the room!

Slide Harley swayed back, then fell weavingly forward and collapsed under the table. Things were black before Harley's eyes, but with animal instinct he fought back. Galloway's gun exploded spasmodically with the twitch of his fingers. The bullets tore into the floor and walls.

Ed Jerome had leaped forward and kicked the shotgun into a corner of the room.

Aberson hadn't yet moved. He was a man whose body was congealed with fear. Galloway, whirling in gun smoke from below the table, coming forward, had now leaped away half across the room. His right fingers still tore at an empty holster.

It sounded like a continual roar of gunfire. Under the table Galloway's gun exploded futilely in Slide Harley's hand. The last shot gone, the weapon fell from his relaxing fingers. Thus he died.

The frozen Aberson came to life. He dropped below the table edge, desperation forcing his own gun into his hand. He shot twice over the body of Slide Harley. Twice Ed Jerome's gun echoed his. Aberson groaned hollowly between tight lips, grasped

one shoulder with a hand, and on the other hand and two knees he began to crawl for the door.

Smoke, rising in weaving spirals, had reached the beams overhead and spread in thin streamers across the room. It lay heavy across the candlelight. There was a metallic crash from the far end of the room. Galloway had a weapon—a dueling rapier from the old rack of cutlery. . . . . Time passing, in fact, had not been greatly longer than it would have taken him to cross the room at a walk. Yet the man who called himself Galloway was in every sense of the word a gunman. Gun battle was his play. He drew for a gun as instinctively as an eye will close before a blow. Had he found his weapon in its holster, the muzzle would have flashed a venomous stream of fire until he won or went down.

His fingers hadn't found it, because the weapon had just lifted in Harley's hand. He had started for the shotgun in the next second, and found Ed Jerome beside it. He had turned, run back. Smoke shielded him. He clutched out at the old rack, and a rapier was in his hand. Tearing it loose, others fell.

He turned toward the rear door, and before him was Don Tomás, an old derringer, also from the rack, in the old man's hand. It pointed squarely on Galloway's chest. Again had Galloway had a gun things would have been different. He would have shot the old man down without a thought. With a rapier, he hesitated—turned half back—

He faced Ed Jerome.

Galloway's colorless eyes were terrible. His putty-like features showed both livid life and fear of death. He was transformed, a killer who also knew terrible fear. He saw in Jerome's eyes that he was about to go down—shot down, in fact, as mercilessly as he himself had killed Abel Calvin.

Galloway semed to poise himself for the final gesture of his life. Then behind him, Don Tomás cried:

"*Amigo*—a *caballero's* weapon!"

SOMETHING slithered across the floor under Galloway's feet. He saw it sparkle with a line of reflected flame. It stopped against Ed Jerome's toe. Ed Jerome stared down at it. The strange pallor was still on his face. He hesitated for an instant.

Then he seemed to smile, between lips twisted with pain. Bending stiffly, leaning to one side, he reached down and picked up the second rapier. It glinted in his hand.

"Right, Don Tomás! For the House of Alcorta, let us say!"

Ed Jerome carefully turned and threw the gun in his hand toward the far door of the room. It clattered on the veranda.

Just that. Seconds before the wildest flight of imagination could not have forewarned the man who called himself Galloway of this. This was beyond his understanding—the cold daring of a man who in the end chose to fight him hand to hand rather than shoot him down unarmed. This was beyond Calvin's killer. But a flash told Galloway that, winning here, Los Parros was still within his grasp.

GUN-SMOKE made only woven threads of blue against the beams now. Below, dull yellow candlelight. The light threw grotesque, great shadows of the two men against the far wall. It fell with full yellow intensity across the face of old Don Tomás Alcorta, whose old eyes were like an eagle's.

Galloway hesitated for just a second. Facing him, smiling, Ed Jerome whipped an equally unfamiliar weapon, to gauge the feel of it. Then throwing his body, Galloway lunged. He knew he had to. Always strike first if possible—his code! Steel hit steel with a vicious ring. Metal slithered on metal with the sound of a knife edge on a sharpening skewer. Ed Jerome drew back, whipping the blade before him. He reached in suddenly—tipped flesh!

"*Bravo!*" echoed the passionate lips of Don Tomás.

Galloway's blade flashed down in turn. It glanced along Jerome's steel. The rebounding blow, like a whip butt, ended on Jerome's forearm. The right arm. He recovered with his own thrust. It fell short. Galloway drew back. He instantly sensed his error and came in with a rush.

He beat Jerome back against the wall, and the young man with a tigerish grace eluded two straight thrusts. He returned the third; missed by a fraction inch of impaling flesh.

They danced across the room. None of the fine art—the parry, weave, draw and play. But it was life or death—and swift! Both men knew that from the start. It gave the muscles of each a final ounce of agility and strength. Each lost consciousness of all else but his foe. Seconds might have passed, or moments. Neither knew. They only fought, one with a face knotted with pain.

To the eyes of one of the old *duelistas*

of the past, for whom these weapons had been made, the affair would have been clumsy, laughably even. To the eyes of Don Tomás it was nothing of that. His eagle-like gaze followed each flash of the steel. He trembled; moved, too, with each thrust.

"Bravo!" came again from his lips. *"Bravo, amigo!* Well done!"

STEEL rang on steel. Both men panted, gasped for breath. Boots crashed on the flooring. Then Galloway must suddenly have seen that he was fighting an already wounded and weakened man. Perhaps that gave him new confidence.

He charged, open. His blade flashed straightly forward. Like the strike of a snake! The slender, cornered point ran through flesh like butter. The point, at the end of that flashing stroke, protruded through Ed Jerome's shoulder.

This happened. But it looked almost as though Galloway had thrown himself on the other steel. Two blades—both reached a mark at a single instant. Both had flashed. As both struck—the end!

A hollow groan came from deep in Galloway's throat. He turned away unsteadily. His blade drew free, still in his hand. It lifted high. Then it dropped from opening, clawlike fingers, clanging on the floor.

The man who had called himself Galloway wove toward Don Tomás. A patch of red was spreading swiftly across the front of Galloway's shirt as he took step by step forward. A terrible look was on his putty-like features, in his strangely colorless, changing eyes.

Just before Don Tomás he fell. His body was lifeless as it touched the floor. Behind stood Ed Jerome, motionless.

Don Tomás bowed toward Ed Jerome.

"Well done, my son—*como caballero!*"

Things suddenly grew black before Ed Jerome's eyes. Knees seemed to turn to water under him. But a smile was on his lips as he slipped forward like a marionette lost from the strings that had moved him.

THROUGH the old house Don Tomás shouted.

"You, Manuela! You, Pablo José! Put life in your feet! *Inmediatamente!*"

The two old servants of the house had already been roused. The sound of gunfire had bombed the quiet of the night. Had Don Tomás realized it, Pablo José had been at his shoulder for seconds, staring in wide-eyed disbelief of the senses at the scene he saw before him. He answered from Don Tomás' shoulder now.

"Si, señor."

"Have Manuela make the house ready. Get all in order. The master of Los Parros has come!"

"The dog!" muttered Pablo José. "He has been here for days already. But to me it looks as though he had just departed."

"Do as I say! First help me carry him to his bed."

Pablo José stared. But Don Tomás gave no glance down to the man who had called himself Galloway. Pablo José shook his head. But he followed.

"Have a great care."

Together, Pablo José muttering still at a world gone mad, they lifted Ed Jerome and carried him across the room.

In the dooryard sounded fast hoofs. Sally Alcorta's voice. Chet Dailey called.

CHAPTER VIII

BEFORE the breaking of dawn all trails converged toward Los Parros. The *vaquero,* Juan Venegas, had ridden swiftly into the mesh of Tealing's net. "Los Parros," he said. "Ride!" Aberson was missing from the other wing of the posse. Tealing knew Galloway and Harley had moved toward the rancho the night before.

It was more than a hunch that told Sheriff Tealing, of Crocker, that the climax of his manhunt had already played itself out at Los Parros while he stood guard along the foothills. He turned toward the ranch at a hard-ridden pace. It was half or three-quarters of an hour after dawn, with the first strong light streaking across the Lagarto, that the buildings and trees appeared like an oasis in the plain before him. Tealing beat rapidly on, well ahead of any of his men. He was on the point of riding into the yards when his eyes hit upon a fresh track heading toward the Lagarto.

The sheriff drew hard rein. He stared: He stared down at the imprints of shod hoofs, fresh thrown soil. Toward the Lagarto, traveling fast, a lone rider—so much snapped through the sheriff's brain. Was it possible? Again? He remembered only too well the other trail that had turned so toward the Lagarto.

"Who? Who'd be hittin' toward the Lagarto now—alone?" Tealing asked himself. "Who'd have the reason? Alone!"

With that word Tealing swung east. No

moment to lose—if he was right. If not, there were plenty of men left behind.

Within two hours he had caught sight of the lone dot ahead. There was no longer any doubt in his mind, with that. The chase turned a bit and Tealing lessened the distance. Inhumanly hard on his mount. Moments later, with the shock of a blow somehow, the sheriff saw the low wash to the right—the strip of country where Calvin had died that first morning. The killer was reriding his own trail! Tealing saw the bank fringe of brush.

He saw the man head for it.

Tealing used no caution now. He had met Jerome the day before in the high country. Tealing had no fear for himself. To meet Jerome again, to shoot it out with him, was all he asked.

The sheriff turned down the bank, riding the edge of the flat wall. His mount crashed through the thin brush. Tealing's gun was in his right hand, lifted. To shoot it out—that was all he asked!

In another moment his hand drew rein so hard that his mount half fell back on its haunches. He saw a thin, stooped figure before him. The man held a wavering gun. It was Aberson.

"I—I'll shoot!" Aberson screamed.

Tealing merely looked at him, wordless.

"I—I'll—" Then Aberson broke as suddenly, crying: "I didn't do it! I didn't have any part in killing Calvin! It wasn't any of my plan. . . . . They made me go on. I was afraid of the thing from the start. Made me go on—hear! Listen! I'll go State's evidence now. I—I'll tell everything. It was Harley's idea. He brought the man that was to play Galloway. It looked like a cinch to get the land, the ranch. Always wanted it, the heart of Los Parros—"

Tealing actually didn't hear the rest. Not consciously, although Aberson's words beat a refrain to his thought. Strange light broke in his brain. He saw a tediously built house of cards collapse in silence. Piece by piece, as one collapsed, the other took form. Calvin had hinted at frame-up at Aberson's that first morning. Flash by flash Tealing saw it. Chet Dailey had sensed something of the truth. . . . .

Aberson's maunderings had ceased. Seeming moments of stark silence passed. Then Tealing looked at Aberson; said:

"Give me that gun. Get on your horse. We'll be riding back!"

LATE afternoon: Los Parros. Don Tomás sat whiling away the sunlight hours in his veranda chair. A hum of voices came from within the great room of the house—Chet Dailey, Ole Jorgensen, Tealing, others. Don Tomás had told all of his own story. He wished to say no more, and he wished to forget. Also, he wished to listen—to other things.

He slowly moved his chair farther down the veranda. There was an open window behind. For half a century that room had been for guests at Los Parros. Old Don Tomás had no sense of being an eavesdropper, for this concerned him too vitally.

He listened, feigning sleep. . . . .

"And do you still think," said the voice of Ed Jerome, through the window, "that this Galloway would remind you of some sleek, lazy cat come to lap the richness of Los Parros?"

"I didn't say it quite like that," answered Sally Alcorta slowly. "You put it badly. But I would say *no,* señor."

"Even personally you might like him?"

"*Si.*"

"Because," continued Ed Jerome, "Galloway hasn't the slightest intention of taking ten thousand acres that belong to him—well, belong to him less than the Continent of Africa, say, which were his father's words."

DON TOMÁS forgot his feigned sleep and sat suddenly bolt upright.

"But," Ed Jerome added, "might he visit a little while among friends? And see you, Sally Alcorta?"

"Yes, señor."

"He would be welcome?"

"For—forever," answered Sally Alcorta scarcely above a whisper.

There was a long moment of silence, and Don Tomás fidgeted restlessly.

"Sally—Sally Alcorta, look at me," said the voice of Ed Jerome. "Sally Alcorta, do you mean—mean that?"

"Señor, the smallest kiss of an Alcorta was never given without meaning. And—and Los Parros needs a master, Señor Galloway, not a visitor."

Don Tomás closed his eyes and settled back in the chair—and smiled.

"A son of his father," he said.

In the great room of the house Ole Jorgensen's voice lifted above the others. It roared, laughing:

"A horse-thief, sure 'nough!"

THE END.

An oil-well driller tells of all-too lively times in the early days of a boom in the Southwest.

By **R. A. Clarke**

The Pistol Whipping

WHEN Seminole first opened up, several years ago, I was transferred there from an older field in Southern Oklahoma. There were four of us, two drillers and two tool-dressers; I was one of the latter. We were met by the "tool-pusher," and at his request we changed our clothes and commenced work rigging up.

We quit at five o'clock, and drove into Seminole, about four miles away, to find a place to sleep—not as simple as it sounds, for a boom town has few vacant beds.

We were fortunate, however; we found a room in a narrow building of unpainted, roughly finished lumber. The rooms were about eight by twelve feet, and the furniture consisted of one fairly large bed, two chairs and a small mirror; there was also one window in each room. The price was twenty dollars a week, cash in advance.

We moved out on the porch, talking to the woman who owned the place; and I foolishly pulled out my wallet, which contained several hundred dollars, to pay her. There were eight or ten men standing around—and one slightly built fellow, with a rather ugly face and coal-black hair, crowded against me when I did so. I am rather quick-tempered; and pushing him away, I told him to stand on his own feet. He gave me a sullen look and walked away without saying a word. I finished paying the woman, and forgot the incident.

BALDWIN and I moved into one of the rooms and went to bed, tired out after our drive and day's work.

Next day we worked hard, and with the assistance of half a dozen roustabouts that the farm boss lent us, nearly completed the rigging-up.

When we got to town and had eaten, Baldwin, who was a heavily built man of about fifty years of age, decided that he would go to bed; but I, being younger, decided I would go out and look the town over.

I suppose I must have wandered around for several hours, for glancing at my watch,

I suddenly discovered it was nearly midnight, and with the thought of tomorrow's work to spur me, I hurried toward my rooming-house.

As I entered the passage that ran down between the doors of the various rooms, it seemed that I saw the third door on the left, which led into my room, close quietly. Probably imagination, I thought, and treading lightly so I would not wake the other inmates, I reached it and turned the handle. As I pushed the door wide, I received a violent blow between the eyes that knocked me down and out into the passage; the next instant a dark figure sprang over my body and ran to the door leading to the street.

I was dazed at the unexpectedness of it all, and by the time I reached my feet my assailant had vanished, but not before I had recognized him as the black-haired fellow who had stepped on my feet the night before. I did not try to pursue him, but went on into my room.

Baldwin, who had been aroused by the noise of my fall, was sitting up in bed demanding to know what it was all about. On the floor lay an ugly-looking blackjack. Nothing else was visible, and nothing had been disturbed—I had arrived too soon after the intruder had made his entrance. Placing a chair and a couple of suitcases against the door, I went to bed.

BOTH crews came to work the next morning, but by noon we were ready to commence drilling on the cement plug. Baldwin and I returned to town, for Baldwin, being the senior, had decided to work the morning "tour," as the twelve-hour shift from midnight till noon is called.

I reported the attempted robbery to the sheriff, but there were too many actual robberies for him to worry about one that had failed; he took down my description of the fellow, though.

At midnight Baldwin and I relieved the other crew, changed our clothes and commenced work. When we had made several runs, we had to change a bit, take off the dull one and put on one that had been sharpened or "dressed" by the other crew. It is not a difficult task, but demands the close attention of those engaged in it. Neither of us knew that we had company until suddenly a harsh voice said: "Raise your hands, you—"

We did, and wheeling around, found ourselves confronted by three men, who were covering us with automatics. One was my assailant Black-hair; the other two rough-looking fellows I had never seen before.

"Where the hell is your money?" said Black-hair. "Come on—talk fast or I'll plug you," he continued as I hesitated.

I told him it was in my clothes hanging in the doghouse, and he motioned with his gun for Baldwin and me to precede him in there. The five of us were quite a crowd in that small space, but with a gun in my ribs, I maintained a discreet silence.

I pointed out my clothes, and the toughs went through them, removing my wallet and a watch that I prized rather highly. They then searched Baldwin's stuff, and when they found only five dollars and a cheap watch, they began to grow nasty. They struck him several times, and then one suggested that they make him climb the derrick without any clothing on him. It was a chilly night, and the rig was on top of a hill around which the wind whistled.

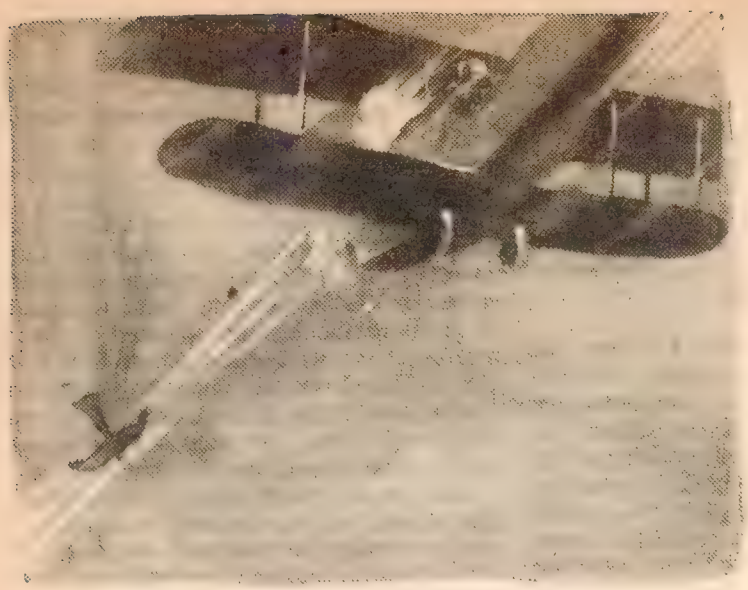
I had kept silent up until this point, but when one fellow emphasized his command to "take them damned clothes off," with a kick in Baldwin's groin, I suggested far from mildly that seeing that they had got what they had come after, it was not very decent to abuse an old man.

The next moment Black-hair with the remark, "You run off too much at the mouth," smashed the barrel of his weapon into my face, cutting it open from nose to point of chin and ruining several good teeth. It hurt like hell; and by way of answer I put both hands into his face—hard. The next instant his two friends were on me, and I received what is technically termed "a pistol whipping" in the oil-fields.

About twenty minutes later I woke up to find Baldwin bathing my face with cold water; when at last I could walk, he put me into the car and took me to town. The doctor sewed forty-two stitches in me, and the couple of dozen bruises that I had also collected kept me in bed for three days.

TWO weeks later I saw Black-hair again, this time at an undertaker's. He had tried to hi-jack another rig, but had made a slight mistake, for only the driller was on the derrick floor; the "toolie" was at his boiler, and he happened to have a sawed-off shotgun out there with him. He saw Black-hair hold up the driller, and creeping up in the darkness to the side of the rig, he let the robber have a load of chilled shot.

My one regret was that I was not that other tool-dresser.



A tremendously exciting wartime flying experience is here vividly recorded — an experience no less hazardous because it happened in training rather than in battle.

Washout No. 6729

By **Captain Witner**

IN the parlance of the flying game, a "washout" refers to any airplane which has been so completely wrecked that it will not pay to remove the wreckage from the scene of the crash for salvage.

"Ship Number 6729, machine-gun practice over Field Number Three, six magazines," announced the *chef de piste*. It was one of the big aviation training-fields in Central France one afternoon on a windy, cloudy and "bumpy" day early in 1918.

I was the pilot of Ship Number 6729, and had been temporarily assigned to an observers' school to ferry student observers around the sky while they practiced aërial gunnery, photographed dummy enemy trenches and directed imaginary artillery fire at imaginary enemy movements.

THIS was in the early war days before pilots were furnished with parachutes, and if anything went "dud" or "hay-wire" with your motor or crate, it was a question of landing your ship—or landing with your ship—in as few pieces as possible.

On this day there was a strong wind, the clouds were low and the air-pockets numerous, making flying very bumpy.

I had made three previous trips over to Field Three. Our targets consisted of a series of trenches, supposedly those of our enemy, which lay in a protected hollow.

My passenger, Lieutenant Darby, was making his third flight as a student observer. The ships were in poor shape and crashes were numerous. Quite naturally, each observer, when assigned to a ship for a mission, looked rather askance at his pilot and wondered to himself if "that bird in the front seat" could fly. Darby now gave me such a look, then placed his extra magazines in the compartment in the rear cockpit and climbed over the side of the ship. Upon making an inspection of his gun he found the cocking lever jammed, and he called to the gunnery officer for a new gun. The type gun we were using at that time was what was known as a double Lewis aërial gun, mounted on a movable terrail, fastened to the rear cockpit, which enabled the gunner to cover a range of three hundred sixty degrees in circumference and allowed an elevation of about forty-five degrees. The gun proper was fastened to the elevating arm by placing it in a socket-like arrangement, and secured by placing a lock pin through the fastening post of the gun, locking the same to the movable arm. By the time the gunnery officer had replaced the jammed gun with a new machine several minutes had passed and I was getting quite anxious to take off for the wind had increased, my supply of gas was getting low as I had not cut the

gun and I did not want to delay for refueling. Finally Darby had his gun in place on the terrail, fastened his safety-belt and signaled his O. K. for a get-away. After a glance at the sock as the wind was constantly changing I taxied to the line, waited my turn for a clear field, gave her the gun and headed her nose for the direction of Field Three, our objective.

WE made the trip over in about six minutes, as I had a strong tail wind for a pusher going over and had no trouble in gaining fifteen hundred feet altitude before we came in sight of the red flag which told us the targets were O. K. for practice.

Our ship was not equipped with phones, so it was necessary for me to cut the motor in order to communicate with my observer —which I did, telling him I would take him over the course once to give him an idea of his targets; he was to commence firing on the second lap over the trenches. As he had six full magazines it would necessitate three round trips over the course in order for him to complete his mission.

We had made two trips over the range and everything was going fine, Darby emptying his "load" on each trip over. One more bank, a straightaway over the course, then I would head her nose for the field and we would be on our hop back home.

I made my bank and straightened out for the last trip over the trenches; Darby had his reloads in place and as I went into an easy bank to give him a better slant at the targets the steady staccato *rat-tat-tat* of his double Lewis told me things were O. K. Then we hit an air-pocket.

Hitting an air-pocket in flying can well be compared to one who is blindfolded walking into a large and deep hole in the ground. While one is falling it does not matter how much he moves his arms or legs—it has no effect on his velocity. The same is applicable in a sense in flying, as no matter how much wiggling of the joy-stick, flipping of the flappers or kicking the rudder bar is done, it has no effect on the action of the ship until solid air is found again. The only thing a pilot can do is to wait until this happens, then pick up the controls again; and although air-pockets or "bumps," are frequent, it is seldom—unless flying close to the ground—that they cause any more difficulty than an uncomfortable feeling, for the drop is rarely more than a few feet and not enough to lose control of the ship.

AT the time of hitting this bump Darby was standing in the observer's cockpit and firing over the right side of the ship. As we hit the bump we were in a bank and started a sideslip, falling to the right.

After the fall and slip, in which we lost about three hundred feet altitude and seemed to hit solid air, I expected the ship to respond to the controls, but no amount of juggling the joy-stick seemed to have any effect on my horizontal stabilizer and we continued to fall and slip, with the ground coming up to meet us at an alarmingly rapid rate. No amount of working my controls was of avail to stop our fall.

But the thing that seemed most odd was that during all the frenzied maneuvering we were doing the continued *rat-tat-tat* of Darby's gun continued—although we were falling almost in vertical bank and were now within a few hundred feet of the ground!

I cut my switch to lessen chances of fire when we hit and, still fighting the controls, glanced around to motion Darby to cover up and prepare for the worst. A few seconds later a ripping of wings, a washing off of the undercarriage and a red-hot motor landing almost in my lap, while my head plunged through the upper wing surface, told me that we had crashed. But I believe I was actually laughing at the predicament of my observer—one which accounted for the continual firing during our fall.

It developed later that Darby in placing his Lewis gun on the terrail on the rear cockpit at the time of taking off had failed to place the key which fastened the gun to the elevating-arm in place. As we went into the bank and hit the bump he was firing over the right side of the ship. The gun slipped from the terrail. Darby, instead of dropping the gun, had caught his fingers in the trigger-guard and was hanging over the side of the ship. Held by his life-belt and unable to let go of the trigger, he was emptying the remaining cartridges into the tail surface of our ship.

As well as we could count the next day when we visited the "washout," there were sixty-one holes in the tail surface of our plane, and he had shot through all the control wires to the rear stabilizers—which accounted for my inability to pick up the controls after hitting the bump.

Fortunately neither Darby nor myself received any serious injuries from our crash. Although within a short time we were both assigned to observation at the front, this experience gave us our greatest thrill.

The Hunter Is Hunted

This story of a Newfoundland school-teacher who went seal-hunting and caught a Tartar is memorable indeed.

By

R. M. McKay

IN 1912 I taught school in a village on the northeast coast of Newfoundland. Villages in Newfoundland usually are clusters of houses scattered around the shores of harbors, the size of the place often being determined by the size of the harbor.

During the winter the villages along that coast, and the surrounding ocean for hundreds of miles off to sea, are solid ice, the drift from the Arctic being frozen into a compact mass.

Every spring the millions of hair seals inhabiting the ocean off Newfoundland swim northward, meet this southbound drift, climb upon it, and breed. The young, known as "whitecoats," are little more than masses of fat until they take to the water less than three weeks after they are born, the fat being the prize hunted by the Newfoundland sealers, who begin their operations during the first week in March.

As the drift passes the coastline on its southward march, the fishermen walk out over the ice, and kill the seals with clubs, the vulnerable part of the animal being the snout. The animal is skinned, the carcass thrown into the ocean, and the fat-laden pelt towed back over the ice to the village, where it is worth from one to two dollars.

A Newfoundland school-teacher's salary was not large, and many teachers welcomed the chance to add to it: even after school-hours, luck might each day bring a couple of whitecoats within reach of the club. Also the hunting carried the spice of adventure: great skill was needed in using the small cakes of ice (called "pans") as stepping- or rather, running-stones to larger pans, and quite frequently a ducking in the icy waters of the northern ocean was the only reward. There was always the danger, of course, that a shifting wind might carry the broken pans off to sea—a tragedy with which Newfoundlanders are well acquainted.

THREE miles off the mouth of the harbor where I taught school there is a rock, huge, black, rising like an inverted thimble seven to nine hundred feet sheer out of the ocean—the exact height is not known. The sides are worn smooth by bergs and the storms of centuries. It is called the Tolt.

By the first week in March, 1912, the ocean ice beyond the Tolt had broken off and was drifting southward, a dangerous mass of small pans, fields, and growling bergs whose depth is so great that winds have no effect against them: even in the teeth of a blizzard the Labrador current carries them southward at five miles an hour. Among those floes the Newfoundland sealing fleet operates from March 15 to May 1.

On a Saturday afternoon I walked over

the frozen ocean to the edge of the ice, near the Tolt, where I hoped to come upon small herds of whitecoats. I found a herd, but came in view while too far away to catch them before they reached the water.

LIKE most persons who, after losing a battle, wonder how they might have won it, I looked around to see if I could have approached from another direction. To the northward was an upheaval of ice pans and tiny bergs solidly frozen together.

The sun was still blazing hotly; there was no wind, and my underclothing was damp with sweat. I had forgotten to bring blue glasses, and my eyes were already throbbing with pain from the sun-glare reflected from the ice. I should have had sense enough to hurry back to the village. Instead, I went to the upheaval, climbed the side of a tiny berg and looked down toward the hollow on the other side. At once I forgot my burning eyes. At the bottom lay a huge seal, asleep. I recognized the breed. We called it a "hood," because when angry it blew over its vulnerable snout a protecting ball of leathery skin tough enough to deflect the bullet from an ordinary sealing-gun. I had been warned that it attacked furiously when angry, and that despite its ungainly bulk, it could travel at incredible speed over rough ice. It was a monster, not less than fourteen or fifteen feet long, and four feet through its barrel-like body. Its hood was not now inflated, and its snout lay open to attack.

Common sense should have sent me back over the ocean to the village. Even if I could approach unnoticed, and club the snout, I could have done nothing with such a huge animal, and, my throbbing eyes made it imperative that I reach the village before I became blind.

But—I started down the slope, slipped on the slippery surface, and slid about a dozen feet. The "hood" woke up. I gave up the thought of approaching him, and tried to scramble back up the slope. I slipped again, and landed with a thump—on the huge barrel-like side of the beast! It swung round, its hood blown up and quivering above its snout. I made one frantic smash with the club, and ran. I was a good runner, having once done the hundred-yard dash in a fraction over ten seconds; but that clumsy flopping beast was a better runner, except where level areas of non-slippery ice gave me a chance to stretch out to the limit—and I most certainly stretched.

I wasn't afraid. I imagine I had no time to be. Panicky I undoubtedly was, since I ran without any knowledge of direction—just ran, and not until I saw the great smooth wall of the Tolt before me did I realize that I had been cornered—and winded. Little fleeting pictures of my mangled and shredded body didn't help me to think clearly. I simply kept on until I met the wall of rock, and not until I was several feet up its side and out of immediate danger did I know I hadn't flown up, that a providential ragged cleft in the face of the rock had given me a rocky pathway.

The vicious beast threw itself against the rock, then lay at the foot to wait for me to come down. Now the pain in my eyes returned and I knew that before long I should be blind—blind, three miles out over the ocean-ice, hanging to the face of a steep wall of rock, with a savage death waiting for me at the foot!

In an hour or so the dying sun would set, and although nights are never really dark on the ocean ice, this one was going to be very dark for me. Already the black hulk of the "hood" had become a blur. The intense pain in my eyes spread through my head and sawed its way down my spine.

THE sun sank lower and cold set in, a numbing, piercing cold that froze the bones. I could not exercise. My sweat-soaked underclothing became icy steel.

The sun set. The temperature gradually worked its way down to zero. Luckily there was no wind. Had there been I must have died within a couple of hours. My mind conjured up fearful pictures. I was afraid of becoming unconscious and slipping from the narrow crevasse. Perhaps the racking pain in my eyes saved my mind from dwelling too vividly on the end. I had no hope of rescue; no one in the village knew where I had gone, and no one would miss me, since I rarely reached my lodging-house until after midnight. Beyond me, off to sea, the dull murmur of the ice-covered ocean, grinding, milling, drummed against the cliff. Once I heard pieces of ice from the top of a berg avalanche down its sides and strike the ocean with a dull roar.

The foolish thought came that the villagers might see a tiny flame against the black background of the Tolt. In my pocket I found a letter and two matches. I set fire to the letter—and held the burning paper until it singed my fingers.

After a long moment I wondered if the vicious beast was gone. I felt my way, groping blindly down the face of the icy cliff, stood listening; then, panic-stricken, scrambled back. I might be standing near the ice, near enough to the beast to be grabbed! Frantically I made my way up the cliff, hoping to find a deeper crevasse.

USELESS to attempt to picture what followed. I must have reached the summit of the Tolt, nine hundred feet above the ocean, where the rounded slippery surface was swept by a freezing wind, where without footing, and without sense of direction, I fought to save my life. I know that several times I hung in sickening terror over the awful edge. There was a nightmare of pain, furious wind, sliding over the edge, and helpless, savage fighting to stay put. Then there was nothing. . . . .

My next picture was the blurred cabin of a sealing-schooner, days later. The schooner had pulled into an ice cove on the lee shore of a near-by southbound berg, had cast an anchor ashore, taken down its sails and sent its crew to sleep with one on watch to see that the schooner did not drift from its snug harbor. The watch had undoubtedly seen my flaming letter. The crew had come to investigate and had found me, paralyzed, in a deep crevasse.

They had heard the story I told in my delirium, and grinned knowingly when I told it later. An iron constitution pulled me through, but not without a scar. Even today my eyes have their periods of sickening pain, and several times I have gone blind, once for as long as thirty minutes. . . . . A fool's reward!

A one-time Montana cattle-man tells a thrilling story of storm and stampede.

By
Harry Simms

The Stampede

DUSK was gathering when we bedded the Buzz-saw beef-herd down about three miles from the shipping pens and the same distance from a small frontier town. Our horses sank to their hocks in the ground, soggy from many rains. The air was full of mixed rain and snow as we shivered in our saddles, waiting for the "cocktail" hands to relieve us. They were coming with the "Rod," Sandy Todd in their lead.

Sandy's ancestry was not well hidden—now he reminded me of an angry Airedale, as he corrugated his brow and scowled fiercely at the threatening black clouds, gathering fast in the northeast. At Sandy's orders we caught night horses before we ate our supper. These we both hobbled and staked for the ground was too soft to hold a picket-pin under a strain. We were to stand double night guard in an attempt to hold the herd; we expected trouble and were not to be disappointed.

The equinoctial storm of the year was always bad in the Montana bad-lands, and it was due. It hit as second guard was due

to be relieved—hit suddenly, with little or no warning, and with a fury that seemed to make the very hills tremble; and for hours it continued to punish us savagely.

First a sharp, short blast of wind, then another more violent that filled the bed-tent to the size of a circus balloon, ripped stakes from the mushy soil, snapped ridge guys and sent the tent sailing off into the night, leaving about twenty scantily clad but exceedingly profane punchers milling about in a hurricane of wet snow. They grabbed such articles of clothing and bedding as was ready to hand and dashed into the other tent, the cook-tent, where a few men were trying desperately to prevent it from following its mate. The ground was a bit more solid there, and by tightening guy ropes and re-driving stakes, it held.

WHEN the bed-tent left its moorings, it sailed southward swiftly gaining height as it went. It was just high enough to clear the backs of the remuda horses that were huddled, backs to the storm, a few hundred yards away. "Deck" Edison, the night wrangler, was with them, a man nearly seventy years old. Deck said he saw a horrible gray shape hovering low over the horses' backs. For moment he thought that it was about to swoop down upon him, and not having the least idea what it was, he gave himself up for lost. Then it soared high in the air and was gone into the black night. It was too much for the half-wild broncs; they snorted with terror and ran, taking Deck with them. The mushy ground was not good for free running, and many of them went down. Deck's horse was among those that went down—then it was up and gone with the crazed remuda. They left the old night-hawk behind with a broken nose, broken collar-bone and many minor bruises, to wander in the blizzard.

I was with the night-herd when the storm struck. There were six of us, and we tried hard to soothe the nervous herd that was already lowing plaintively—a bad sign in wild cattle. For a minute I thought we would hold them; then—we heard a sound as of giant wings flapping. The tent had arrived; but we, like Deck, did not know what on earth it was. It swooped down upon us like an enormous gray ghost and with a gigantic slap landed in very center of the terrified cattle. I know some pretty salty cow-waddies that night that were just as frightened as the wildest steer in that herd. I was one of them.

THOSE steers were wild—just as wild as some animals that are classed as "game." After that lost banshee, as one rider called it, plopped in their midst, all the cowboys between the Peace and the Rio Grande could not have held them. We didn't try. With horns popping like shots, and bellowing with terror, they were off.

A young puncher from Colorado named Tommy Elkins was caught in their path. Tom was an excellent cowboy. If he had not been, he would have been finished. It is instinctive in a case of that kind for a rider to try to outrun the stampede; if he loses and goes down—to use an expression of this day and age, it is "just too bad." Tommy realized the danger of running before that herd with footing such as he had; so he held in his mount and allowed them to carry him along with them as he gradually worked back, finally to drop out. It was a dangerous job, for sharp horns may rip your legs, and your horse can always stumble. But Tommy made it safely.

With a frenzy that increased as they ran, the herd rushed blindly onward with the storm. The shipping pens loomed up in their path just for a few seconds; then they were gone—smashed into kindling-wood. Elkins would have died, and died a hard death, right there, had he attempted to run ahead of that herd. Few men have ever seen a stampede as bad as that one—none have ever seen a worse one. Four thousand crazy steers stampeding in such a concerted panic as those, made almost an irresistible force. The stockyards gone let them into the one and only street of the little town. The street was wide and straight and then turned at a sharp angle. Devils could not have driven them up that street in daylight, but the memory of the terror behind them and the storm sent them into it without a stop. They filled it completely.

I saw that street the next morning, and it looked as if a tornado had hit it. There was not a window left facing it. Sidewalks were merely kindling. The Buzz-saw herd had removed every porch, every hitch-rack, broke every window, tore down some fences, including the one at the end of the street, for they did not turn but went straight on. A little chicken-ranch was there, and they romped over that and into the hills beyond.

MEANWHILE we, the other five guards, were battling our way inch by inch against the storm to get back to the round-up wagon. If we had known what lay in

wait there for us we very likely would have followed the herd. If we had, Deck Edison would surely have perished. We had only gone a little way when we found ourselves among galloping horses—the remuda. One stopped in front of me and I reached out and felt a saddle on him. We knew what that meant and began calling Deck's name. When we found him, he was about all in. Soon we found the camp—with all hands trying frantically to keep the tent down. They could not keep a stake in the ground.

Being fully dressed we immediately went to work to secure the tent. We got some "corral forks," a stick used to make the cavy yard and with them and some pothooks and racks from the Dutch-oven outfit, we managed to put it in better shape but there never was a time for several hours that it wasn't in danger. If it had blown away some of us would have died.

Bedding was spread about the ground flaps. Some sat on that while others were ready to grasp the tent whenever danger threatened. We had a very small supply of firewood and the cook, at Sandy's orders, made some coffee, which we hurriedly drank. We had made a bed in the rear of the tent for the injured man, who now seemed to be badly hurt. Some of the men had lost all of their outer clothing and were swathed in blankets of many colors, making a ludicrous appearance.

We were crowded in there, and as the storm continued unabated and the wet snow found its way among us, our nerves wore raw from the night's happenings and tempers gave way. We were not the type of men used to practicing self-control. Rather, we were wont to welcome anything that afforded an outlet for suppressed emotion. Our only light was a flickering lantern that hung from the ridge-pole near the fore part of the tent. Sandy Todd had taken a stand beneath that, like a watchdog. He had lost his hat but did not seem to mind. There were snowflakes in his hair and on his bushy eyebrows.

I DON'T know how it started. There was jostling, followed by some swearing. Personalities were freely exchanged, old wounds were reopened; reference was made to passed injuries, real or fancied. A fighting word was passed, a blow struck and in an instant we were milling in a furious free-for-all.

We were brought to a dead stop by a roar of rage from old Sandy.

"Enough!" he bellowed. "Put one of yer hooves on ould Deck, and I'll be sprayin' ye with lead—so help me God, I will!"

He stood well defined in the lantern's light, feet wide apart, brows bristling and gray eyes blazing with anger. He held a muzzle-loading shotgun, and its twin muzzles menaced us ominously as we tried to shrink from them. We knew the gun. The cook kept it handy to kill rabbits and feathered game—it was always loaded. Furiously he berated us in no uncertain manner, although he well knew that there were men there who would think little of killing him. But we were shamed, and subsided. One hard-bitten rider from New Mexico named Blazer was standing close to Sandy, and he looked Sandy straight in the eye and chuckled. Sandy glared at him savagely, and I thought he would shoot him. Blazer laughed out loud, and the tension broke.

RIGHT after that it quit snowing and got colder; day was breaking and we speedily went to work to gather firewood, for most of us were more or less wet and would have frozen in a short while. A fire was kindled in the stove, while a roaring bonfire was made of scrub-pine knots, greasewood and sagebrush. Ropes were strung and clothing and blankets were hung up to dry. Some searched for lost clothing while others went looking for horses. Sandy and another rider took Deck into town to catch a train that was due, Deck being able to ride. Two riders found the pesky bed-tent and brought it in. It was soon erected, for we needed it.

Elkins showed up, covered with dried mud and grinning. He had spent the night in the saloon in town and he was dry, warm and drunk. He had a two-gallon demijohn of whisky, a gift from Sandy. After a hot breakfast, with clothes dried we sat about the fire mixing hot drinks. Our spirits rose as they tingled through our systems and we could joke about the night's happenings. We were talking about the near riot we had in the tent and how the wily Sandy had prevented it. I spoke to Blazer.

"You took an awful chance, Bob. Sandy was mad; I thought sure he would shoot you."

"I didn't think so," answered Bob with a wide grin. "If you all remember, I was right under the light with Sandy. That gun was loaded—I knew that. But—I noticed that there wasn't any caps on the nipples of that old blunderbuss!"

The Scarred Print

The Chief of the Ohio State Bureau of Criminal Identification tells of the capture of a murderer.

By **Chester A. Myers**

THE annual exhibit of the Ohio State Bureau of Criminal Identification at Ohio's State Fair always provides a rather enjoyable holiday for me. After the grubby business of man-hunting, it comes as a welcome relaxation.

The booth where our display is made is always crowded with laughing, joking people, eager to have their photographs taken with a rogues' gallery camera, and urging their friends with many gibes and genial insults to do the same. Very few of them consent to have their fingerprints taken, however. Honest people as well as crooks seem to have a deep-rooted aversion to having a record made of their finger-impressions. I can't say that I blame them much.

My assistant at the booth last year was a fingerprint expert from one of Ohio's penal institutions. Fulman was a natural-born showman. All day long, in stentorian imitation of the barkers in the midway outside the building where our exhibition was housed, he harassed the jovial crowd to step up and have their fingerprints and photographs taken, meanwhile keeping a weather eye on the glass case containing a collection of deadly weapons, all of which had a sinister history. Knives, pistols, blackjacks, hypo-needles: each had played a dark part in some crime of violence, and we did not want to take a chance on any of that grisly collection turning up missing and figuring in another criminal drama. This case seemed to have a horrid fascination for the crowds, particularly for the women.

ON the second day of the exhibition, I was called to the telephone in the administration building and was told briefly by my clerk at the other end of the line that my services were required by the sheriff of a county some thirty miles upstate. The details of the crime which necessitated my presence, as gleaned by the clerk, were few. Murder and robbery! But it was enough to send me hurrying back to the booth and placing Fulman in charge of the exhibition until my return. In ten minutes I was on my way.

The sheriff met me at the end of my thirty-mile drive, and urged me to accom-

pany him at once to the scene of the crime. On the way out he acquainted me with the details.

Silas Armstrong, the murdered man, was little known in the county seat. He lived alone in a more or less neglected-looking little farm, doing his own housework and the few chores necessary to keep his place habitable. He was about sixty-five years old, and as in the case of most anchorites, it was generally thought that he had immense sums of money hidden about the place. I took this with a grain of salt, having had experience with cases involving so-called wealthy hermits before.

The body had been removed at the coroner's orders when we reached the home of old Silas, but a deputy sheriff was guarding the premises and had succeeded in preventing the morbidly curious from overrunning the place and destroying possible clues.

I found that the old man's head had been crushed with the traditional "blunt instrument" and his body left lying a few feet from the barn door. The coroner had fixed the time of death at some time in the early hours of the morning of the same day. Old Silas had evidently been aroused from sleep by a noise in the barn, and arising to investigate it, had met his death. His shotgun, unfired, lay close to where his half-dressed body had been found.

SEARCH of the barn revealed the instrument of death: a crude but deadly blackjack made by forcing a large iron nut on the end of a length of broom-stick. And curiously enough, the old man really had hidden money about the place. The dirt floor of the barn had been spaded up in several places, and other evidences of a hasty search were manifest.

A few minutes later I was startled by the shout of the deputy sheriff who was prowling at the other and darker end of the barn, and reached him in time to prevent his pouncing on a shining tobacco-tin in the bottom of which was a lone dollar-bill. The old man had hidden his money in the barn, and the murderer had known it!

Handling the tin carefully, I brought it to the light and dusted it with fingerprint powder, then gasped. Staring out at me, bold as life, was a fingerprint surrounded with numerous smudges—and such a fingerprint! Never would that murderer be picked up anywhere that he would not be

(Continued on next page)

"The Happiest Day of My Life!"

"OUR WEDDING DAY! A year ago it seemed like a dream that would never come true, for my salary then was barely enough for *one* to live on. I faced the facts. Unless I could make more money I had no right to keep Ruth waiting. What I had to do was find some way to make myself *worth* more.

"It was Ruth herself who showed me the way. She clipped a coupon out of a magazine and we sent it to the International Correspondence Schools for information about their courses. Within a week I had enrolled. The training I got from studying at home showed up almost at once in my office work. They gave me more responsibilities. Inside of six months I was promoted, with a substantial raise. Now I'm getting double what I was a year ago —*and we're married!*"

I. C. S. Courses have given thousands the special knowledge they need to win better jobs and bigger pay. *Why not you?*

One hour of spare time a day, spent in I. C. S. study, will prepare you for the position you want, in the work you like best. Find out how. It won't obligate you in the least to ask for full particulars. Do it now—for HER!

Mail the Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
"The Universal University"
Box 2435-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, **"Who Wins and Why,"** and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X:

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Architect
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Building Estimating
☐ Wood Millworking
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Structural Draftsman
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Electric Wiring
☐ Electrical Engineer
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Welding, Electric and Gas
☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
☐ Telegraph Engineer
☐ Telephone Work
☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machinist ☐ Toolmaker
☐ Patternmaker
☐ Pipefitter ☐ Tinsmith
☐ Bridge Engineer
☐ Bridge and Building Foreman
☐ Gas Engines ☐ Diesel Engines
☐ Aviation Engines
☐ Automobile Mechanic
☐ Plumbing ☐ Steam Fitting
☐ Heating ☐ Ventilation
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Steam Engineer
☐ Steam Electric Engineer
☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Refrigeration ☐ Highway Engineer
☐ R. R. Locomotives
☐ R. R. Section Foreman
☐ R. R. Bridge and Building Foreman
☐ Air Brakes ☐ Train Operation
☐ Highway Engineering
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Coal Mining Engineer
☐ Navigation ☐ Boilermaker
☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Agriculture ☐ Fruit Growing
☐ Poultry Farming ☐ Radio
☐ Marine Engineer

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Office Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Personnel Management
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Accountancy ☐ Cost Accountant
☐ C. P. Accountant
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Secretarial Work
☐ Spanish ☐ French
☐ Salesmanship ☐ Advertising
☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Lettering Show Cards ☐ Signs
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Complete Commercial
☐ Civil Service ☐ Mail Carrier
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Grade School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ College Preparatory
☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning
☐ Lumber Dealer

Name.....
Address.....
City ..... State .....
Occupation.....
If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

A Career in Aviation

AVIATION is the great career of the future! Get into it *now* by practical, proved routes—study International Correspondence Schools Courses in Aviation Engines and Ocean Navigation!

Captain Lewis A. Yancey, hero of the recent New York-Bermuda flight, says: "The I. C. S. books on Navigation are about as fine as have ever been prepared on the subject, and are to be highly recommended to the aviator who is desirous of learning the navigational side of his calling."

The Aviation Engines Course includes necessary study of Mathematics, Mechanical Principles, Combustion and Fuels, Principles of Gas Engines, Construction, Carburetion, Ignition, Lubrication and Cooling, Pumps, Propellers, etc. You can start at *once*. Study *at home* in spare time. Mark and mail the coupon today!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
"The Universal University"
Box 2436-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation on my part, tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked X:

☐ AVIATION ENGINES ☐ OCEAN NAVIGATION

Name . . . . . .

Street Address . . . . . .

City . . . . . *State* . . . . . .

Occupation . . . . . .

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

Here's Steady Work!

Traffic Inspectors are in demand—always. It's steady, healthful work with regular hours. Travel, or remain near home. Men 19-55 can qualify. For eleven years, railways have looked to us — the only training school for traffic inspectors in the country for men. We'll train you in a few weeks of spare time home instruction, and upon completion, assist you to a position paying $120 to $150 per month plus expenses or refund your tuition. Rapid salary advances to $175, $200, $250 per month. Our free booklet tells all about this profitable profession—what it can do for you. Send for it today.

STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE
Division 12 BUFFALO, N. Y.

TRAVEL FOR "UNCLE SAM"

$1900 to $2700 A YEAR

Railway Postal Clerks

Many Government Jobs Open to Women

Mail Coupon Today Sure

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. L-277, Rochester, N. Y.
Sirs: Rush to me without charge, (1) 32-page book describing U. S. Government jobs, (2) List of U. S. Government jobs now open to men and women 18 to 50. (Tell me how to get a position.)

Name . . . . . .

Address . . . . . .

(Continued from previous page)

instantly recognized by that print. It was a whorl of conventional pattern, but straight down through the ridges was a jagged scar!

As a precautionary measure, I fingerprinted the sheriff, coroner and other searchers, for it was necessary to eliminate them, and the dead man himself; and hurrying to town with the coroner, I went to the morgue and fingerprinted the old man. It was not his print.

Another hour and a half found me back in my office with a negative made of the latent print from the tobacco-tin; and my office force, armed with prints from the negative, searched our files. All of which was fruitless; many scarred fingers were turned up from our files of a half-million prints, but none with a scar running through that particular pattern. Evidently our murderer had no previous criminal record.

THE sheriff had been instructed to round up as many suspects as possible, and to fingerprint them in all haste; so the next morning brought three sets of fingerprints of various known suspicious characters in the village. It needed only a glance at them to make me call the sheriff and instruct him to release his suspects. The scarred print was not among the three groups. There was nothing more to be done from our angle until the murderer was actually picked up somewhere and fingerprinted. The local and county police could handle the investigation of the people in the vicinity who had knowledge of the old man's hidden money.

Later in the forenoon, carrying the deadly blackjack carefully wrapped in paper, and a picture of the scarred fingerprint, I went out to the fair-grounds and acquainted Fulman with the details of the case. Being a fingerprint man, I knew that he would be keenly interested. He was—then, the showman in him uppermost, he insisted on placing the grisly murder instrument in the display case!

"A farmer or some one from the rural districts committed that crime," he said. "A city tough would have used a knife or a gun, even provided that he knew the old man had money. In addition, the murderer knew the dead man's habits, knew that he lived alone, and when his search for the money proved fruitless, he attracted his attention, probably even called to him, knowing that there was no one else in the house to come out with him. Leave that thing in the case! If the murderer is a

farmer and has that money, it is possible that he will come to the fair to spend some of it. I'll watch the case and the people who gather around it! Besides," he said, grinning, "it's good publicity. The news is in the papers today, and all the farmers for miles around know of it, by this time. We'll show 'em the murder weapon itself!"

That bird should be in the show business. However, his reasoning was good, so the instrument stayed in the case, and Fulman kept his eagle eye on the case.

The day wore on, with Fulman keeping up an incessant chattering and chaffing, inviting the people who gathered around to have their photograph taken for the rogues' gallery, and imploring them to step up to be fingerprinted so that their neighbors would know of their criminal lives. His stuff went over big, and many had their pictures taken on our promise to forward them the developed negatives and prints.

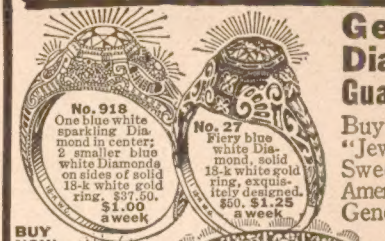
During one of Fulman's humorous spiels, my attention was attracted to a young couple—attracted because they seemed to be on the point of a quarrel. The girl seemed insistent that they have their picture taken, and the young fellow, a sullen-looking, rather handsome lad, was objecting violently. There was nothing unusual in that; the same scene had been repeated many times before our booth in the last few days; but it had never before been ill-natured, and in the end the young fellow or girl who had objected generally gave in somewhat sheepishly to the other's pleading. But this young chap seemed really angry at the girl's insistent demands that he have his picture taken. His face was an angry red, and he tugged violently at the girl's arm to get her away. He did not even glance at the exhibition of deadly weapons wherein rested the latest murder instrument.

The girl was a spunky little thing. When she saw that he was really angry, she jerked away from him, and pushing through the crowd, flounced up to the railing of the booth and requested somewhat tremulously to have her picture taken. With a view to settling their differences, I took her picture, with some good-natured chaffing directed meanwhile at her sullen escort.

WHEN the girl's picture had been taken, she apparently wished to make amends for their quarrel, and laughingly dared him

(Continued on next page)

DIAMONDS WATCHES
CASH or CREDIT


No. 918
One blue white sparkling Diamond in center; 2 smaller blue white Diamonds on sides of solid 18-k white gold ring. $37.50. $1.00 a week
No. 27
Fiery blue white Diamond, solid 18-k white gold ring, exquisitely designed. $60. $1.25 a week
BUY NOW
No. 824
No. 910
Magnificent blue white Diamond in square prong top ring of solid 18-k white gold. $100. $2.50 a week.

Genuine Diamonds Guaranteed!

Buy of Loftis—"Jewelers to the Sweethearts of America for Three Generations."

SEND FOR CATALOG

Big free book of 2000 illustrations and descriptions. Catalog explains everything. 10 Months to Pay.

Elite Wedding Ring, solid platinum, only $19.50. In solid 18-K white gold, $5.00, or with 5 Diamonds, $18.75. Buy now!

Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. Credit terms: Pay one-tenth down; balance weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly at your convenience. ALL GOODS DELIVERED ON FIRST PAYMENT. ORDER NOW!

Lady's Bulova Wrist Watch No. 926—"Baroness" 14-k gold filled; 15 Jewels. Dust-proof case, $29.75. $2.97 down; $2.97 a month.

Elgin "Legionnaire" for men No. 927—latest style, embossed dial, $19. $1.90 down and $1.90 a month.

Our References: Any Bank or Banker in U.S.A.

The Old Reliable Credit Jewelers

LOFTIS BROS. & CO. 1858

Dept. B-219 108 N. State St. Chicago, Ill.

You don't have to be "Talented"

GREAT FUN

YOU don't have to be musically inclined. If you can wiggle your fingers and blow, you can learn to play this wonderful *Buescher True Tone Saxophone.* In a few evenings you *can be playing* easy tunes. Within a *few weeks* you will be having the *time of your life.* From then on it's clear sailing. Fun! Success! Possibly fame and fortune! 3 *free lessons* give you quick, easy start. *Easy terms.* Send postal for beautifully illustrated catalog; explains everything. No obligation.

BUESCHER BAND INSTRUMENT CO.
707 Buescher Block S2 Elkhart, Indiana

Book on Law Free

Write today for this new book. It tells you how a law training will shorten your road to success. It also carries a vital and inspiring message to every ambitious man! Find out about the opportunities that await the law trained man. Find out how you can learn law right in your own home. No obligations. Book is absolutely *free.* **Write Today** while low tuition fee is in force.

American Correspondence School of Law
3601 Michigan Avenue Dept. 115-B Chicago, Illinois

COMING!
"The Clue of La Mano Nero"
By Lemuel De Bra

to be fingerprinted. He scowled darkly and refused.

Seeing that the girl was determined (I guess all women like to show their power over their menfolks), I thought of a way to fix up the whole thing. Beckoning the lad over, I opened the case and invited him civilly to look over the weapons at close range. He caught the girl's eye and somewhat unwillingly looked at the display. Taking up a huge, shining knife, I held it out to him and invited him to touch the blade. Again he shot a glance at the girl, and what he saw in her eyes made him put out his hand and touch the shining broad surface of the blade. She smiled approval.

Taking back the knife, I quickly turned my back and powdered the blade surface with fingerprint powder; then swinging around, I laughingly faced the couple.

"There you are, miss!" I exclaimed. "He has had his fingerprints taken, and it didn't hurt him a bit!"

The girl laughed delightedly; but a murderous look in the man's face caused me to step back instinctively.

"Wipe those things off!" he snarled. "Damn you, I'll make you smart for that!"

SURPRISED and indignant, I opened my mouth to placate him, and at that moment my glance fell on the blade, now covered with five perfect impressions of the man's fingers brought into relief by the black fingerprint powder. What I saw caused me to almost drop the knife. I could barely restrain a shout. One of the fingers showed a whorl pattern with a ragged scar running down the center of the finger!

Carefully, I laid the knife on the table and beckoned Fulman to my side.

"Watch the girl," I whispered. "I am going to place that bird under arrest!"

Fulman nodded; and turning quickly, I vaulted the railing surrounding our booth and made for the place where the man and girl had been standing. The man was gone! The girl stood wide-eyed and trembling, unable to grasp the reason for his sudden desertion—by this time, he had pushed his way through the dense crowd and disappeared. Gently I pushed her toward Fulman.

"Stay with him until I return," I instructed her kindly. "Don't be afraid; no one is going to hurt you."

THE girl nodded. I dashed through the crowd, and rounding up the special police on duty at the grounds, made an effort to apprehend the man before he left the vicinity. Our search was fruitless. In that crowd it was next to impossible to locate a lone man. Besides, crowds are easily worked into a panic, and we dared not stir up a hue and cry.

Returning to the booth and the terrified girl, I learned the man's name and discovered that she had a good picture of him. I drove her to her home in the township close to the county seat where the murder was committed, and secured the man's picture. Before nightfall five hundred copies of the picture were in the mail, going to most of the police departments in the country.

A check-up with the sheriff at the county seat disclosed that while he was acquainted with the man, he did not know him well, the man having lived with relatives at the county seat but a few months. Probably a careless remark about the hermit and his supposed wealth had given him the idea of robbery and murder.

Four days later a man was picked up in a town just over the State line on suspicion of murdering a filling-station attendant; and our circular having reached that particular police department only a few days before, the man was identified by his photograph and the fingerprint that accompanied it as our murderer.

He's in jail now awaiting trial for murder of the filling-station man; and if he beats that rap, he will go to the chair on the evidence as represented by the scarred print.

$500 in Cash Prizes

AFTER reading these five stories of Real Experience, you may feel that you too can write, in two thousand words or less, a true story of Adventure, Mystery, Humor, Sport or Business that will be deserving of a prize. If you wish to try this, write the story in your own way and send it to the Real Experience Editor of The Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y., with stamps for its return if the Editor doesn't retain it for publication. If he does keep it, the Magazine's check for one hundred dollars will be sent you. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return.

A Stirring Novel of the Sahara!

"The Red Star of Islam"

By WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

A desperate enterprise in the desert—hard riding, sudden surprise, and war to the knife. The able writing man who gave us those fine stories of the famous Hell's Angels squad is at his best in this colorful novel of the great adventure carried through by an American sergeant in the Foreign Legion.

Along with eighteen other first-rank stories, it appears in the next, the August, issue of—

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The McCall Company, Publisher, 230 Park Avenue, New York

THE SHOCK OF FACING

what your figure may become

"COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE"
(*Thomas Campbell*, 1777-1844)

AVOID THAT FUTURE SHADOW

by refraining from over-indulgence, if you would maintain the modern figure of fashion

We do not represent that smoking **Lucky Strike** Cigarettes will bring modern figures or cause the reduction of flesh. We do declare that when tempted to do yourself too well, if you will "Reach for a **Lucky**" instead, thus avoid over-indulgence in things that cause excess weight and, by avoiding over-indulgence, maintain a modern, graceful form.

When Tempted
Reach for a
LUCKY
instead

"It's toasted"

Your Throat Protection—against irritation—against cough.

©1930, The American Tobacco Co., Manufacturers